Hafa Adai!

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:

Is your holiday spending going to increase, remain the same, or decrease this year compared to last year's?

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PANDEMIC ALERT STATUS

PHASE 6

As of December 7, 2009

Phase 6: The pandemic phase, is an indication that a global pandemic is underway.

For more information about the H1N1 flu, contact DPH at 236-8797, Monday to Friday, from 8am to 5pm, 234-8950 during after hours, e-mail cnmipheoc@gmail.com, or visit www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/.

Source: CNMI Department of Public Health, World Health Organization

INSIDE

Tree Lighting

The time of the year has come again for Hyatt Regency Saipan to light up its 12-foot Christmas tree at the hotel's lobby.

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She-Wolf

From the moment Shakira stepped onstage, it was clear who was running the show.

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Mobil mirrors Shell's gas price hike—again. **PAGE 2**

Judge disqualifies three more voters in mayoral race. **PAGE 3**

Fitial seals victory with 370 lead

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos raises the hand of Gov. Benigno R. Fitial yesterday at the Covenant Party's headquarters on Middle Road in Gualo Rai after the Commonwealth Election Commission certified the two as the winners in the runoff election held Nov. 23, 2009.

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial of the Covenant Party will be serving for another five years starting January 2010 after sealing his victory over Republican Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider when the counting of absentee ballots wrapped up yesterday.

Fitial, 64, is the first CNMI governor to be re-elected since 2003.

Official election tally showed that Fitial and his running mate Lt. Gov. Eloy S. Inos got a total of 6,610 votes, a 370-vote lead over the 6,240 votes that Hofschneider and House Speaker Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan) received.

Fitial is also the first governor to serve

See FITIAL on Page 4

GOP president: We are graceful losers, we will move on

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The president of the CNMI Republican Party, Dave Attao, said yesterday the party accepts and respects the voters' decision to put incumbent Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos back in power.

See GOP on Page 4

Election board is ready for any challenge

Absentee voters' turnout still low

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Election Commission board is ready to face any possible legal challenge relating to the result of the historic gubernatorial runoff that was won by the incumbent tandem of Benig-

See ELECTION on Page 4

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR

A 30-foot, rain-proof Christmas tree dwarfs adults and children who came to join first lady Josie Fitial as she turned on the lights for the tree and the Nativity scene in front of the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe last night. Beach Road now also offers a feast of lights with the lighting of Christmas sculptures also last night. ***See story on Page 4.***

HAIDEE V. EUGENIO

Mt. Carmel prepares for jubilee celebration

CONTACT INFO

- Mount Carmel Rectory
  Tel: 234-3000

The Diocese of Chalan Kanoa will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its establishment and the Silver Episcopal Anniversary of Bishop Tomas Aguon Camacho, D.D., on Jan. 17, 2010.

See MT. CARMEL on Page 4

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bishop Tomas Camacho, standing third from left, with Fr. Ike Ayuyu, Charles and Cathy Cepeda and Fr. Ryan Jimenez, chairpersons of Bishop Camacho's 25th Episcopal Anniversary and Diocese of Chalan Kanoa 25th Anniversary of its establishment.

Local

Man guilty of receiving boxes of stolen shirts

A Superior Court jury pronounced yesterday a 31-year-old man guilty of receiving over 100 boxes of stolen Polo shirts from the L&T International warehouse compound in Lower Base.

The six jurors found De Zhu Sun, a Chinese national, guilty of one count of receiving stolen property over $20,000.

Associate Judge Ramona V. Manglona, who presided over the trial, set Sun's sentencing for Feb. 10, 2010. He was allowed to remain at liberty until then.

When asked about the verdict, Sun, through an interpreter said: "I'm innocent."

Assistant attorney general Matthew Meyer told *Saipan Tribune* that the offense carries a five-year prison term but he does not know yet the government's recommendation.

Attorney General's Investigation Unit investigator Erwin T. Flores stated in his report that on May 25, 2008, the Department of Public Safety received a complaint about the theft of numerous boxes of Polo shirts from the second floor of a warehouse in the L&T International compound.

Flores said that, on Dec. 5, 2008, police officers arrested Sun and three others who had just delivered boxes of Polo shirts to the Rainbow Auto Shop in Chalan Laulau. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Mobil mirrors Shell's gas price hike—again

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Mobil Oil Marianas increased its pump prices by 10 cents a gallon yesterday, again reflecting Shell Marianas's price hikes on Friday.

The price increases on Saipan come at a time when the price of crude oil hit a seven-week low last week, to over $75 a barrel.

Self-serve regular unleaded gasoline now costs $3.579 a gallon at Mobil and Shell service stations on Saipan.

Because of the 10-cent hike, self-serve super unleaded gasoline at Mobil stations now costs $3.879 a gallon. At Shell stations, this costs $3.899 a gallon.

Mobil didn't change the price of its diesel fuel at $3.749 a gallon.

Service stations said the price change took effect at 9am yesterday, days after Shell increased its prices on Dec. 4.

This is the seventh time so far this year that Shell and Mobil raised their pump prices on the island. This means that Saipan motorists have been paying 85 cents more a gallon to fill up their vehicles since February.

Both oil giants do not issue advance notice of any pump price increase; motorists learn of price changes when service stations change the figures on their price displays.

Oil prices ended last week tumbling to a seven-week low as massive crude supplies and a surging dollar overshadowed encouraging job numbers.

The U.S. dollar, which is used to price crude contracts, has had an especially heavy influence on oil trading this year. It's helped oil double in price from $40 to more than $80 a barrel in the past several months despite weak consumer demand and bloated supplies. But as the dollar rallied Friday, oil prices started to fall.

Benchmark crude for January delivery lost 99 cents to settle at $75.47 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract slumped as low as $74.85 earlier in the day.

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A weekly update from the Marianas Visitors Authority
Tourism is everybody's business.

Healthy coral reefs are an important part of tourism in the Northern Mariana Islands.

Each month, the Marianas Visitors Authority facilitates FAM(iliarization) tours by international media and travel agents that highlight diving, snorkeling, submarine tours, and other marine activities in their publicity of our islands.

Over the last few months, this media has included: from Japan, Global Trotters dive guidebook (above at Wing Beach); from Korea, NS Homeshopping cable station and tour company JAUTOUR; from Kazahstan, Yel-Arna TV channel; and from Russia, magazine Y- Pokupau, Planeta Tour, SIBVEL Tour, "Star of Gabriel" Travel Agency, NEDA Tour Agency, RUEX Tour, Bashkortostan, Evrika-Soft Ltd. Publishing House, Aira-Tour Ltd., Lensey Travel Agency, Ruskkrim Tour Ltd., Tashly Diving Club, Shambhala Trave Moscow, Shambhala Tour Ltd., Capital Tour Ltd., Stekton-M VIP service, Koreana Tour Ltd., and World of Asia Travel Agency, Argumenty I Fakty, Argumenty I Fakty International, Komsomolskaya Pravda, Podvodny Club, Predelnay Glubina, and Pro Zdorovey.

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This Tourism Tuesday space is provided by Marianas Variety

Immigration Court sets first hearing next week

Five removal cases filed

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Saipan U.S. Immigration Court will conduct its first hearings in the CNMI next week following the filing of five cases.

Clarence Wagner, chief counsel for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Honolulu, Hawaii Immigration and Customs Enforcement, told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that the hearings are set for Dec. 16, 2009, at 9am.

Wagner said all five they filed are removal cases. He refused to disclose the nationalities of the respondents and discuss other details of the cases, saying they need to protect the individuals' privacy rights.

Fong

"It's the first opening of the court," said Wagner, adding that they want to make sure that the proceedings are done properly.

The chief counsel stressed, though, that this is the same process and procedures they follow with the rest of the United States.

Wagner disclosed last week that the CNMI government referred at least four cases to ICE and that they were evaluating them for the appropriate charges to file.

The federalization of local immigration took effect on Nov. 28.

Wagner will represent DHS on any cases that are filed during his particular visit to the CNMI this month.

Assistant Chief Immigration Judge Thomas Y. K. Fong last week stated that, although there is no permanent judge assigned to the Saipan Immigration Court, they have judges on call for duty that will hear cases immediately, if necessary.

Fong said the judge who will likely to hear cases if they don't have a judge on Saipan is a judge from Honolulu, Hawaii.

IN BATTLE FOR SINGLE N.I. VOTE

Wiseman disqualifies three more voters in mayoral race

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Superior Court Associate Judge David Wiseman disqualified yesterday three more voters, bringing to 10 the total number of votes that were struck from the Northern Islands' mayoralty race.

Wiseman earlier upheld two voters as legal, including Northern Islands mayor-elect Tobias Dela Cruz Aldan.

The judge disqualified three persons as voters for the Northern Islands after the completion of examination conducted by Aldan's counsel, Robert T. Torres, and Ramona Taisakan Rebuenog's counsel, Richard W. Pierce.

Rebuenog was a Northern Islands mayoralty candidate who lost to Aldan by a single vote. She sued, challenging 21 votes that she alleged were illegal.

One of the three disqualified voters told Pierce yesterday that he does not remember whom he voted for between Aldan and Rebuenog.

Pierce insisted on an answer, saying it is impossible for a person not to remember whom he voted for in the Nov. 7 election.

Torres objected. "This is harassment of a voter! Let's play fair here. Let's play by the rules!" Torres said.

Wiseman continued the hearing for tomorrow, Wednesday, at 9:30am.

In an interview with *Saipan Tribune* after the hearing, Torres said more voters will be examined on Wednesday.

Torres said he believes that voters called to the witness stand are being harassed because they're being challenged on cross examination.

"They're asked whom they voted for, and they start asking about campaign, rallies, meetings, and relatives and it's irrelevant," the lawyer said.

The Election Commission and Aldan are defendants in the lawsuit.

Rebuenog asked the court to declare her as the elected mayor of the Northern Islands because she had the largest number of legal votes cast in the Nov. 7 election.

She asked the court to void any certification of election issued to Aldan.

Aldan, an independent candidate, received 68 votes, while Rebuenog, who ran under the Covenant Party, got 67 votes. This prompted Rebuenog to move for a recount of votes.

During the recount, CEC determined the same result and certified Aldan as the winner of the race.

Ex-NMI immigration director now consultant for local govt

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
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REPORTER

Former CNMI Immigration director Melvin Grey has started working as a private immigration consultant for the government, weeks ahead of the federal takeover of local immigration on Nov. 28.

His last official day as CNMI Immigration director was Oct. 5.

Grey held the post for almost three years since he was appointed by Gov. Benigno R. Fitial in February 2006.

After stepping down as CNMI Immigration director in October, he went on to establish Grey Consulting Inc., which provides immigration consulting services.

He said he has no retainer's fee from the CNMI government.

Prior to working at the CNMI Division of Immigration, Grey worked as CNMI resident senior special agent, Immigration and Naturalization Services/Immigration and Customs Enforcement Unit of the Department of Homeland Security since 2001.

Grey retired from the federal government in 2004 after 29 years and seven months of service. He first came to the CNMI in 1999 to investigate a Chinese smuggling case.

Now having retired from the CNMI government as well, Grey said the CNMI will still be his home.

He said he enjoys having his own consulting firm.

"It's like having a semi-retired life. I'm my own boss," added Grey, who is from Nevada.

He said he has been helping the government with immigration transition issues, among other things.

CNMI immigration came under federal control on Nov. 28 pursuant to the Consolidated Natural Resources Act or Public Law 110-229 signed by President Bush in May 2008.

This ended the CNMI's 34-year control of its borders since becoming a member of the American family.

The CNMI was the second to the last U.S. territory to control its own immigration. American Samoa still controls its borders.

At the stroke of midnight on Nov. 28, U.S. Customs and Border Protection took over immigration processing at the Saipan and Rota international airports.

Months leading to the federal takeover, many of the over 70 CNMI immigration officers have started looking for other jobs. Others have applied for CBP jobs but due to the federal agency's 37-year-old threshold, many of them were automatically disqualified from moving on to take the exam. It's not known yet whether a single CNMI immigration officer has been able to get a job with CBP.

When Grey's term with the division ended, he was replaced in an acting capacity by Vince Lizama.

Fitial had said that many of the remaining immigration officers, who are still reporting for work, have been or will be assigned to other local agencies including the Division of Customs Services and the Labor and Immigration Identification System. Others may be assigned to the Department of Corrections.

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First lady turns on lights for giant Christmas tree

First lady Josie Fitial switched on the lights for a 30-ft. Christmas tree in front of the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe last night, about an hour after her husband, Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, delivered a victory speech for officially winning one of the longest elections in CNMI history.

The rain-proof Christmas tree dwarfed the big crowd of adults and children.

"This reminds us of Christmas and for people to feel the spirit of Christmas. The First Lady's Vision Foundation plans to do this every year," the first lady told *Saipan Tribune.*

She said they cleaned up the old Christmas tree for this year, but plans to make a new one next year.

After the offering of prayers and speeches, the first lady turned on the switch to light up the giant Christmas tree and the Nativity Scene or Belen at 6:13pm.

Gloria Dei choir sang *Silent Night* and other Christmas carols, as the crowd marveled at the lit Christmas tree. A small feast followed.

The first lady thanked those who made the Christmas tree and Nativity Scene project possible, including the United Filipino Organization, the Department of Corrections which allowed 11 inmates to help, the Department of Public Works, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp., Danny and Remy Buniag, and Lucy Aldan.

Daniel Buniag, the governor's special assistant for special projects, said cleaning and building of the Christmas tree began on Tuesday.

Last night also marked the lighting of all Christmas sculptures along Beach Road. ***(Haidee V. Eugenio)***

MT. CARMEL

From Page 1

The celebration will highlight an important milestone in the Catholic Church's presence in, and its historical impact on, a young and diverse Commonwealth, led by one of its own through the person of Bishop Camacho.

Camacho was born on Sept. 18, 1933, on the island of Saipan. On June 14, 1961, at 27 years old, he was ordained a priest. On Jan. 13, 1985, then-Monsignor Tomas Aguon Camacho, at 52 years old, was ordained and installed as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa. Principal consecrator was the late Archbishop Felixberto Camacho Flores, and co-consecrators were the late Bishop Martin Joseph Neylon, S.J., and Archbishop Anthony Sablan Apuron, O.F.M. Cap.

The CNMI has since been shepherded by this committed servant of God who adopted "*Fiat Voluntas Tua*" ("Thy will be done.") as the theme for his coat of arms.

The Diocese of Chalan Kanoa now comprises 13 parishes on the islands of Rota, Saipan, and Tinian.

In conjunction with the Bishop's formal intent to retire when he turned 75 years old last year, *Thy Will Be Done* is now the hope and prayer of the diocese as it takes on preparations and awaits a new bishop to lead it in the years to come.

An executive committee for the 25th anniversary has been formed and is chaired by Charles and Cathy Cepeda. The Cepedas, joined by Fr. Ryan Jimenez and Fr. Isaac Ayuyu, have been meeting with and continue to oversee teams planning the anniversary celebration and jubilee year events.

A series of diocesan-wide settings will be held at the Mount Carmel Cathedral in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan. Starting Jan. 9, 2010, a nine-day Liturgy of the Hours (Evening Prayers) and Novena to the Holy Spirit will be held at 7pm. A Eucharistic Celebration to commemorate the actual date is set for 6am on Jan. 13, 2009. On Jan. 17, the Novena to the Holy Spirit will be set for 2pm, followed at 3pm by a diocesan-wide Mass of Thanksgiving to launch the jubilee year celebration.

Members of the clergy from Rota, Saipan, Tinian, and Guam will be in attendance. All parochial and ministry teams will also be in attendance and joined by various civic and public leaders. Everyone is invited to join in these events.

For additional information, you may contact Fr. Ryan Jimenez or Fr. Isaac Ayuyu at the Mount Carmel Rectory at 234-3000. ***(PR)***

GOP

From Page 1

He offered a congratulatory message to the winning candidates yesterday and plans to personally call the governor today to extend the same message.

"We congratulate them. We hope they will continue to do what they can to help our community and build our economy where it used to be so all of us can prosper," Attao said.

Yesterday's counting of the absentee ballots for the runoff election showed that the Covenant Party's tandem of Fitial and Inos garnered a total of 6,610 votes, while the GOP's standard bearers, Heinz Hofschneider and Arnold Palacios, got 6,240.

The GOP headquarters in As Lito was empty when visited by *Saipan Tribune* after the certification of election results yesterday noon.

Both Hofschneider and Palacios were not answering their phones when contacted numerous times by this reporter for comment.

The Covenant Party confirmed that Hofschneider/Palacios have yet to concede the election to the winning candidates as of early last night.

Attao confirmed that a meeting was held outside the headquarters yesterday.

However, he said he has yet to speak with both candidates and ask them about their plans.

"I haven't had the chance to speak to them yet, but I am pretty sure that they will accept what the people have decided. I know that there are some things to look at in the government…but GOP will move on and help the administration move forward," he said.

There were unconfirmed rumors circulating yesterday that Hofschneider's camp is thinking of challenging the election result. A close ally of the group confirmed the "plan" to challenge the result.

However, Attao said "the party has not met to discuss anything like that yet… and we haven't really thought of that concept."

"We are graceful losers and we will move on," he added.

Attao emphasized, though, that his statement is on behalf of the GOP party and not for any specific candidate.

"As a party, we cannot talk about individual choices…only on behalf of the party," he said.

When asked if he or the party will support Hofschneider/Palacios if they decide to challenge the election result, Attao declined to comment.

"We have to meet first and see where they stand on the issue. But for the party, we want to move forward…I cannot speak on their behalf," Attao added.

ELECTION

From Page 1

no Fitial and Eloy Inos of the Covenant Party.

Election board chair Frances M. Sablan stressed this with the *Saipan Tribune* yesterday after the board certified the election results at 4pm.

"We're going to deal with it…if there's a challenge filed at the proper court. We will find out what the challenge is and the board will go from there," she said.

The commission is an independent body and will be represented in court by its legal counsel, appointed by the Attorney General's Office.

Based on the law, candidates can ask for a recount or file a lawsuit after the results are officially certified.

Sablan told *Saipan Tribune* that the commission fully performed and functioned based on its rules and governing policies during the election.

"I am confident we did our best in our job," she said.

A total of 1,822 absentee ballots were mailed out for the runoff election. Of this number, 665 were counted during the Nov. 23 counting.

Yesterday, a total of 944 envelopes were picked up at the post office but Sablan said only 725 were deemed "good" ballots. She added that there were some envelopes that contained multiple ballots, mostly from families.

After the counting, the Republican Party tandem of Heinz Hofschneider and Arnold Palacios had 428 votes, while Fitial and Inos had 297.

Despite Hofschneider's 131-vote lead in the absentee ballots, it was not enough to overcome Fitial's lead of 501 votes prior to yesterday's counting of the remaining absentee ballots.

The unofficial election results now show that Fitial garnered a total of 6,610 votes in the runoff election while Hofschneider got 6,240, giving the incumbent governor a lead of 370 votes.

'Overall absentee turnout low'

Although there was a good turnout in the absentee ballots received yesterday, Sablan said this was still "a low turnout" because it was a small fraction of the total number of absentee voters abroad.

A large number of the 1,370 absentee voters that were counted included "emergency absentee voters" from Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

"This is not really a true figure of the 1,822 ballots that we sent…" she said.

Of the 665 initial absentee voters counted last Nov. 23, about 300 to 400 of them were considered "emergency absentee voters" who cast votes in advance because they were not on island on election day, Sablan said.

"In my calculation, it is merely only over 50 percent of the true absentee voters," she added.

The commission has yet to know how many of yesterday's ballots were emergency absentee voters.

Sablan said 211 of the 944 ballots received yesterday were not counted because these were either postmarked after Nov. 23, had no stamp, or had no date in the requirements.

The commission said a total of 12,850 regular and absentee voters participated in the runoff election. In the general election, a total of 13,784 voters participated. This translates to a drop of 6.7 percent in participation.

FITIAL

From Page 1

a five-year term instead of the regular four years as a result of a newly ratified legislative initiative that requires the holding of general elections on even-numbered years.

Were it not for a new runoff election law, the Hofschneider-Palacios team would have won by only eight votes over the Fitial-Inos tandem during the four-way gubernatorial race on Nov. 7.

The eight-vote lead was the closest gubernatorial race in CNMI history.

But because none of the four original candidates got at least 50 percent plus one of the votes cast in the Nov. 7 general elections, a runoff election was held on Nov. 23. The two other candidates in that election were independents.

The Republicans and the Covenant team, however, had to wait until Dec. 7 for the official counting of additional absentee votes.

"Now that the election is over and the result of the election is official, I would like to ask all people of the CNMI to come together, and help me and the lieutenant governor so we can all move forward," Fitial said right after the lighting ceremony for the First Lady's Vision Foundation Christmas tree in front of the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe.

First lady Josie Fitial, for her part, said she's thankful for the support given to her husband's team.

In a statement, Fitial and Inos thanked their opponents "as they ran a formidable race."

Fitial and Inos also thanked all voters for once again giving them their vote of confidence to lead the Commonwealth for the next five years.

"As recipients of the majority votes, we recognize that the voters understand that we are making great progress on the road to recovery and prosperity. We have much to do and are well prepared to continue and enact policies that will benefit all residents. We will leave no stone unturned in our efforts but we realize that we cannot do this alone. We would like to reach out to all the residents and ask for their support and assistance," they said.

They said "now is the time to put politics aside and work together toward a more prosperous future."

Official tally

Fitial's 501-vote overall lead in the CNMI's first gubernatorial runoff election on Nov. 23 narrowed to 370 after the counting of 725 absentee votes yesterday.

Hofschneider got more absentee votes than Fitial yesterday, 428-297, but it was not enough to topple the incumbent governor's overall lead.

Commonwealth Election Commission executive director Robert Guerrero read the unofficial tally at 4:07pm at the Multi-Purpose Center where the manual counting of ballots was held.

The commission, chaired by Frances M. Sablan, certified the elections results before 5pm.

Fitial got 6,610 total votes, while Hofschneider got 6,240.

The commission said it received 944 envelopes, and six of them contained multiple ballots. A total of 725 absentee ballots were counted; the rest were either spoiled ballots, postmarked after Nov. 23, had no stamp, or had no postmarked dates.

Around 4:30pm, Fitial and Inos addressed their supporters at the Covenant Party headquarters on Middle Road.

Covenant Party chair Gregorio "Kachuma" Camacho also addressed the crowd, along with House Floor Leader Joseph N. Camacho, a former independent lieutenant governor candidate, Rep. Oscar M. Babauta (Cov-Saipan), and Special Assistant for Administration Esther Fleming.

Direct mandate of the people

Inos, the first appointed CNMI lieutenant governor, said it feels different to have a "direct mandate" from the people.

"This is very rewarding," he added.

Fitial appointed Inos lieutenant governor when former Lt. Gov. Timothy P. Villagomez was convicted in federal court on corruption charges.

Inos said he never dreamed of being elected into office as lieutenant governor.

"I came from a poor family. We all worked our way through but we're fortunate to advance our education. That paid off. That's my advice to young folks—do not forget the value of higher education. It brings a lot of empowerment," he said.

As of 7 last night, Fitial had yet to receive a call from Hofschneider.

But Fitial said he's not expecting a call from his opponent. Even when he first won in the 2005 gubernatorial election, Hofschneider didn't call him to concede the election, he said.

"Even if Heinz doesn't call me, I plan to call him. It could be [Tuesday]," Fitial said.

The Hofschneider-Palacios tandem advocated "change" in leadership, versus Fitial-Inos's "proven leadership, proven experience."

'It's their prerogative'

Camacho said it's Hofschneider and Palacios' prerogative to challenge the election results, should they decide to do so.

"They can do that. But I don't see the need to do that," he said.

Fitial and Inos separately echoed Camacho's statement.

"That would be up to them if they want to challenge the results," the governor said.

Fitial and Inos said they will be releasing information on their transition team in the coming days.

"This transition team will be performing a top to bottom review of all government operations in an effort to ensure that government resources are being spent wisely and policies are being carried out that provide a real and true benefit to every citizen," they said.

Effective yesterday afternoon, Camacho was appointed chairman of the Transition Committee.

Former Public Safety Commissioner Clyde Norita was appointed vice chair of the Transition Committee.

Plea bargain offered to 3 teens in MHS guard's murder

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General has offered a plea bargain to three teenagers who were charged in the killing of a security guard at Marianas High School in Susupe last year.

Assistant attorney general Brian Gallagher informed Superior Court presiding judge Robert Naraja yesterday about the ongoing plea negotiations with Edward Blas, Randy Igisomar, and Eric Rabauliman.

Naraja set the change of plea hearing for Jan. 11, 2010, at 1:30pm.

Chief public defender Adam Hardwicke, counsel for Randy Igisomar, said they are still negotiating with the prosecution.

Igisomar and Edward Blas, who were 16 years old when the murder happened, were made to undergo psychological evaluation to determine whether they are mature enough to stand trial. Rabauliman was 18 when the crimes occurred.

Hardwicke said he already received the psychological evaluation results.

Gallagher said he needs to talk to the doctor to clarify some issues in the evaluation result.

Attorneys Lillian Tenorio and Bruce Berline are representing Rabauliman and Blas respectively.

The defendants are being charged with first-degree murder, burglary, conspiracy to commit assault with a dangerous weapon and burglary, theft, and assault with a dangerous weapon.

Rabauliman, Blas, and Igisomar are accused of killing Efren Lagua Ballesteros on or about Nov. 17 or 18, 2008.

Police said Igisomar and Rabauliman had confessed to the crime, saying that they attacked the security guard with a piece of wood, a PVC pipe, and a rebar before breaking into several classrooms at MHS where they stole laptops and money.

Ballesteros, 45, was found dead at MHS campus in Susupe where he was assigned. His wallet with $300 cash in it and his wristwatch were reportedly stolen.

Investor defends Air Saipan

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A ranking officer of the proposed Air Saipan—one of the investors in the new company—has come to the defense of one of its officials, Dean Mills, against allegations of being a con man.

William Chen of Golden Century Holdings LLC also disclosed that the business is a "new venture, new capital and new team" that will focus on providing a link between China and Saipan.

"We want to make clear to the people of Saipan that this is a new company. It is not taking on any old debt of the previous company and is fully focused on providing a link between China and Saipan," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

Formal announcement of the new business is slated in the third week of January, according to Chen.

He cited among the proof of its commitment the memorandum of agreement the company signed with LH Consultancy and plans of appointing experienced officials and other operational people with vast aviation experience to protect their investment.

Initial capital amounts to $20 million, according to company officials.

"Our plan pumps serious time, effort and money into the island of Saipan, which we believe it needs," he said.

Chen said the idea of trying to get Air Saipan flying has been on their minds in the past few years.

Dean Mills, who is heavily involved as he is the president of one of the companies that holds shares in the new venture, had this plan in 2005. Mills brought this idea to investors with the support of Chinese operators.

Chen emphasized that the deal is not a "fake" transaction, as a Web site had alleged.

"This new Air Saipan and its board will not tolerate any slander in any form. We certainly are not fakes. We can advise we are extremely committed to this project and will make full disclosure of our intent and balance sheets in due course. We will take our time setting this up to make it right," Chen told *Saipan Tribune.*

Dean Mills last week hinted that the company may sue the Web site www.deamillsconman.com for what he claimed were unfounded allegations against him and Air Saipan.

Chen said the only thing relevant with the company is the name.

"The shareholding and partners are different and with much larger capital base than the initial airline," Chen said, adding that due to Mills' health, he will be taking a back seat through the launch of the airline and will not be involved with day-to-day operations.

They hope to have him back full time in the Spring.

"In due course the people on the Web site will be dealt with, and where necessary compensation made. Mr. Mills has our full backing and has been spending the last year working on his health," Chen added.

OGA initiative author gives 1st 72-hour notice of CUC hearing

By HAIDEE V. EUGENIO
haidee_eugenio@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The author of the Open Government Act popular initiative, Rep. Tina Sablan (Ind-Saipan), was the first one to post a 72-hour public notice on an official legislative meeting yesterday—the first day of the Act's application to the CNMI Legislature.

Sablan sent yesterday morning an electronic notice of a meeting by the Public Utilities and Infrastructure Committee of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation.

In the meeting, the delegation will receive testimony from the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. on its compliance with federal stipulated orders on water, wastewater and used oil.

CUC accrued $630,000 in penalties in the first six months this year for not complying with the provisions of two stipulated orders dealing with the Clear Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act requirements.

The PUIC hearing comes at a time when U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials are on island for their annual CNMI program review.

According to Sablan's notice, the PUIC hearing will be held on Thursday, Dec. 10, at 10am in the House chamber on Capital Hill.

The agenda includes "public comments."

"Members of the public would certainly be welcome to attend and submit testimony if they wish," Sablan said when asked for comment.

Copies of the PUIC notice have also been filed with the Office of the Delegation Clerk, posted at the executive administration building, and released to the media.

Shortly before noon, SNILD clerk Alicia DLG. Leon Guerrero also sent a notice of the PUIC meeting via e-mail and telephone to the media, to comply with the Open Government Act.

Besides the 72-hour public notice requirements, other changes to both the House and Senate rules involve public comments, and record keeping.

CNMI voters ratified Sablan's Open Government Act popular initiative during the Nov. 7 general elections. The initiative applies the Open Government Act to the Legislature.

Sablan, who is also the chair of the PUIC, said the three CUC officials who have been asked to submit testimony before the committee on Thursday "confirmed attendance as of last week."

They are CUC executive director Antonio Muna, CUC assistance executive director Abe Malae, and CUC deputy director for water and wastewater Bruce Megarr.

Sablan also attached in her mass e-mail a copy of the warning letter from the US EPA to CUC regarding accrued penalties for violations of the stipulated orders, dated Oct. 16, 2009; and the governor's latest extension of CUC's state of disaster emergency.

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Wish kids join lighting of Hyatt Christmas tree

Hyatt Regency Saipan's general manager Nick Nishikawa, back, fifth from right, is joined by other Hyatt officials and staff and the families of Make-a-Wish Foundation beneficiaries before the lighting of the Christmas tree at the lobby of the resort-hotel on Dec. 4, 2009. Inset shows the lit Christmas tree.

JOVAN I. FRED

By JOVAN I. FRED
jovan_fred@saipantribune.com
REPORTER-TRAINEE

The time of the year has come again for the Hyatt Regency Saipan to light up its 12-foot Christmas tree at the hotel's lobby. This year, the giant Christmas tree was joined by seven smaller Christmas trees that were placed at the hotel's different restaurants and the lighting was extended to the resort's gardens.

The presence of children made the event even more special. Hyatt general manager Nick Nishikawa invited Make-A-Wish Foundation beneficiaries this year to do the honors of lighting the 12-foot tree, like last year.

"We want the children to enjoy and celebrate the spirit of Christmas," said Nishikawa, adding that Hyatt is a big supporter of foundations that deal with children with special needs.

He said it is very important to make everyone happy despite the bad economy and that he wants to bring more people together, especially children, so they could take part in showing the Christmas spirit by lighting the tree.

Hyatt hired the band Star Society to sing carols at the event.

"Years before, government officials attended this event, but when GM Nishikawa took office, he wanted to have more kids to participate [in lighting the tree]," said Josephine Mesta, Hyatt's human resources director.

Thirty-eight confirmed families were on the invitation list, but only seven Make-A-Wish children showed up with their families.

This year's beneficiary of the Hyatt's Golf Tournament on Nov. 14, 2009, was 11-year-old Elaijah Nekaifes, who wished for a computer game. He was this year's selected child from the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

When ask about how he felt about the whole event he said, "I feel happy but [embarrassed] because there's a lot of people watching."

Nekaifes attended the lighting of the tree with his parents and siblings.

The lighting of the Hyatt Christmas tree has been a tradition for 20 years now and Hyatt Regency Saipan looks forward to more years of children participating in the annual event.

Man gets probation for pot possession

The federal court on Friday sentenced former CNMI courts building superintendent Joseph Reyes Guzman to a year of summary probation for possession of 19 marijuana plants.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Alex R. Munson also orderedhiim to pay a $1,000 fine and a $25 court assessment fee.

Guzman, 48, was also required to take a drug test within 15 days and to undergo at least two periodic drug tests every month.

During the hearing, assistant U.S. attorney James Benedetto recommended a prison term of 30 days. Defense attorney G. Anthony Long moved for a probation sentence.

Guzman pleaded guilty to one count of misdemeanor possession of marijuana.

The agreement stated that on July 22, 2008, Guzman was found in possession of 19 marijuana plants in various sizes. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICE
Second Floor, Afetna Square Building, San Antonio, P.O. Box 10007, Saipan MP 96950

NOTICE ON BOND CLAIMS
2009 ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING OFFICE AWARDS AND SETTLEMENTS

December 7, 2009, first notice
December 8, 2009, second notice

COMPLAINANTS WHOSE ADMINISTRATIVE AWARDS HAVE NOT BEEN PAID:

Any complainant who was awarded money damages in an administrative order or settlement in **2009** in a labor case or a consolidated agency case who has not been paid in full on that claim should register with the Labor Department. Please come to the Complaint Intake Section, **Monday through Thursday, 9 am to 11:30 am,** and fill out a declaration affirming that payment has not been made. Please bring a copy of the administrative order in your case and your work permit card. A complainant who has not been paid has **until December 30, 2009** to report to the Complaint Intake Section.

After your claim is filed, the Department will determine if it is covered by a bond. Not all awards in labor cases or consolidated agency cases are covered by bonds. Some awards are only partially covered because the terms of most labor bonds are limited to three months' wages and a set amount for medical expenses or repatriation tickets. The terms of labor bonds assume that foreign workers will file their claims promptly and will not let wage claims of more than three months accumulate. Some awards are not covered by a labor bond at all because the employment was illegal and the employer never supplied a bond. However, all unpaid settlements or awards from the Hearing Office should be registered, and the Department will process all registered claims.

All claims with respect to unpaid wages and settlements **from 2008 and prior years** are now being heard and will be completed by the end of the year. When the Labor Department has exhausted its administrative remedies with respect to a claim, if any amount is still owing the claim is forwarded to the Attorney General's office for action in the courts if practicable. The notice from the Labor Department referring a claim to the Attorney General is posted on the Department's website, www.marianaslabor.com.

If you have questions about registering a bond claim, please call Renita Camacho, who is in charge of the Complaint Intake Office, at: 236-0958/7/6.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is currently conducting an assessment of its sewer collection system. Our goal is to provide efficient, effective and equitable service for all of our customers.

Over the next four to six weeks, CUC employees will be conducting on-site interviews, inspections and other tests designed to determine and identify all conveyance structures that are part of, and attached to, the sewer collection system.

We will strive to minimize inconveniences to property owners and the community. We appreciate your patience and cooperation as we improve service to all of our customers.

For any questions or concerns, please contact CUC at 235-7025 to 7032, extension 107 or 137.

/s/ ANTONIO S. MUNA

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

PROMOTIONAL & OPEN COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION ANNOUNCEMENT

It is the policy of the Board of Education, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, that the Public School System's Human Resources shall be applied and administered according to the principles of equal employment opportunity as defined by the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Public Law 6 - 10, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, handicap or place of origin. Applicants for this position must be a U.S. Citizen or be eligible and authorized to work in the U.S., including the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Announcement No: **PSS-2009-092**
Application & Employment Type: **Non-Certified**
Position Title: **CIP COORDINATOR (Chief Engineer)**
Pay Level/Step: **UNGRADED** Per Annum Salary: **$50,000.00**
Opening Date: November 30, 2009 Closing Date: December 15, 2009
Location: **PSS – ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES DIVISION**
Benefits: Salary Commensurate with qualifications and experience, plus excellent benefits (including Life Insurance, Retirement Benefits, and Paid Leave/Holidays
Minimum Requirements:
Graduation from a US accredited college or university with a BA degree in Architecture, Civil Engineering, or related field, plus at least five (5) years experience in construction management, architecture, or related field; CNMI License preferred.

INTERESTED APPLICANTS MAY OBTAIN A DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTION WITH QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION FORMS AT THE PSS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE AT THE 3rd FLOOR RETIREMENT BUILDING, CAPITOL HILL. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MUST BE ATTACHED TO COMPLETE APPLICATION FORMS: (1) COPY OF DIPLOMA/DEGREE, (2) TRANSCRIPTS, (3) POLICE CLEARANCE (FROM PLACE OF RESIDENCE FOR PAST SIX MONTHS), (4) VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT LETTER, (5) RESUME, AND (6) TEACHING CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE).COMPLETED APPLICATIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE OR MAILED TO: CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, ATTN: HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, RETIREMENT BUILDING; THIRD FLOOR, P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950, and TEL. #. (670) 237-3051, FAX # (670) 664-3707. ALSO VISIT http://www.pss.cnmi.mp/humanresources ON THE WORLDWIDE WEB.

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

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Announcement No: **PSS-2009-090**
Application & Employment Type: **Non-Certified**
Position Title: **COMPTROLLER (Internal Auditor)**
Pay Level/Step: **UNGRADED** Per Annum Salary: **$40,000.00**
Opening Date: **November 30, 2009** Closing Date: **December 15, 2009**
Location: **PSS – FISCAL & BUDGET OFFICE**
Benefits: Salary Commensurate with qualifications and experience, plus excellent benefits (including Life Insurance, Retirement Benefits, and Paid Leave/Holidays
Minimum Requirements:
Bachelor's degree in Accounting from an accredited college or university with Certified Public Accountant (CPA) preferred, plus three (3) years work experience in government accounting or internal auditing or closely related experience with two (2) years of work experience using Wang computer and Dialog software.

INTERESTED APPLICANTS MAY OBTAIN A DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTION WITH QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION FORMS AT THE PSS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE AT THE 3rd FLOOR RETIREMENT BUILDING, CAPITOL HILL. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MUST BE ATTACHED TO COMPLETE APPLICATION FORMS: (1) COPY OF DIPLOMA/DEGREE, (2) TRANSCRIPTS, (3) POLICE CLEARANCE (FROM PLACE OF RESIDENCE FOR PAST SIX MONTHS), (4) VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT LETTER, (5) RESUME, AND (6) TEACHING CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE).COMPLETED APPLICATIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE OR MAILED TO: CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, ATTN: HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, RETIREMENT BUILDING; THIRD FLOOR, P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950, and TEL. #. (670) 237-3051, FAX # (670) 664-3707. ALSO VISIT http://www.pss.cnmi.mp/humanresources ON THE WORLDWIDE WEB.

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950
HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

PROMOTIONAL & OPEN COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION ANNOUNCEMENT

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Announcement No: **PSS-2009-089** Application & Employment Type: **Non-Certified**
Position Title: **FINANCIAL / BUDGET ANALYST I-IV**
Pay Level/Step: **25, 26, 29 & 32 / 01-12** Per Annum Salary: **$17,700.92-$42,558.00**
Opening Date: **November 30, 2009** Closing Date: **December 15, 2009**
Location: **PSS – FISCAL & BUDGET OFFICE**
Benefits: Salary Commensurate with qualifications and experience, plus excellent benefits (including Life Insurance, Retirement Benefits, and Paid Leave/Holidays
Minimum Requirements:
Financial / Budget Analyst I – Any combination equivalent to graduation from college or university with a BA degree and at least one (1) year related work experience or High School graduate with at least five (5) years related work experience.
Financial / Budget Analyst II – Any combination equivalent to graduation from college or university with a BA degree and at least two (2) years related work experience or High School graduate with at least six (6) years related work experience.
Financial / Budget Analyst III – Any combination equivalent to graduation from college or university with a BA degree and at least three (3) years related work experience or High School graduate with at least seven (7) years related work experience.
Financial / Budget Analyst IV – Any combination equivalent to graduation from college or university with a BA degree and at least five (5) years related work experience or High School graduate with at least nine (9) years related work experience.

INTERESTED APPLICANTS MAY OBTAIN A DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTION WITH QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION FORMS AT THE PSS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE AT THE 3rd FLOOR RETIREMENT BUILDING, CAPITOL HILL. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MUST BE ATTACHED TO COMPLETE APPLICATION FORMS: (1) COPY OF DIPLOMA/DEGREE, (2) TRANSCRIPTS, (3) POLICE CLEARANCE (FROM PLACE OF RESIDENCE FOR PAST SIX MONTHS), (4) VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT LETTER, (5) RESUME, AND (6) TEACHING CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE).COMPLETED APPLICATIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE OR MAILED TO: CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, ATTN: HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, RETIREMENT BUILDING; THIRD FLOOR, P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950, and TEL. #. (670) 237-3051, FAX # (670) 664-3707. ALSO VISIT http://www.pss.cnmi.mp/humanresources ON THE WORLDWIDE WEB.

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HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITY (FOR PSS EMPLOYEES ONLY) EXAMINATION ANNOUNCEMENT

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Announcement No: **PSS-2009-086** Application & Employment Type: **Non-Certified**
Position Title: **SCHOOL VICE PRINCIPAL I-II**
Pay Level/Step: **UNGRADED** Per Annum Salary: **$40,000.00-$50,000.00**
Opening Date: **December 4, 2009** Closing Date: **December 21, 2009**
Location: **PSS – KagES / GES / DDES / MHS / RHS / KHS**
Benefits: Salary Commensurate with qualifications and experience, plus excellent benefits (including Life Insurance, Retirement Benefits, and Paid Leave/Holidays
Minimum Requirements:

Vice Principal I
(a) Graduation from an accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree in education, related field or equivalent.
(b) At least three (3) years appropriate teaching experience.
• Must take and pass PRAXIS I & the appropriate PRAXIS II exam starting July 31, 2007.

Vice Principal II
(a) Master's degree in education and administration or a related field.
(b) At least three (3) years appropriate teaching experience; and
(c) Must possess a valid administrator certification.
• Must take and pass PRAXIS I & the appropriate PRAXIS II exam starting July 31, 2007.

INTERESTED APPLICANTS MAY OBTAIN A DETAILED JOB DESCRIPTION WITH QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION FORMS AT THE PSS HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE AT THE 3rd FLOOR RETIREMENT BUILDING, CAPITOL HILL. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MUST BE ATTACHED TO COMPLETE APPLICATION FORMS: (1) COPY OF DIPLOMA/DEGREE, (2) TRANSCRIPTS, (3) POLICE CLEARANCE (FROM PLACE OF RESIDENCE FOR PAST SIX MONTHS), (4) VERIFICATION OF EMPLOYMENT LETTER, (5) RESUME, AND (6) TEACHING CERTIFICATE (IF APPLICABLE).COMPLETED APPLICATIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE OR MAILED TO: CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, ATTN: HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE, RETIREMENT BUILDING; THIRD FLOOR, P.O. BOX 501370 CK, SAIPAN, MP 96950, and TEL. #. (670) 237-3051, FAX # (670) 664-3707. ALSO VISIT http://www.pss.cnmi.mp/humanresources ON THE WORLDWIDE WEB.

Census sets job fairs on Rota and Tinian

Dates, times and locations to complete an application and be tested are as follows:

ROTA	TINIAN
Monday, Dec. 14 – 2:00pm – 7:00pm Tuesday, Dec. 15 – 9:00am – 12:00noon Rota NMC Campus	Monday, Dec. 21 – 2:00pm – 7:00pm Tuesday, Dec. 22 – 9:00am – 12:00noon Tinian NMC Campus

In addition to the 2010 Census Job Fair events that continue on Saipan this week, the local Census office will also be hosting job fairs on Rota and Tinian within the next two weeks.

Testing will take 30-45 minutes and will be offered about every hour for applicants with a completed application. Applicants must bring a picture ID in order to complete the testing on the day of the Job Fair.

A police clearance is not needed to apply and will be completed prior to employment if selected, along with a mandatory drug screening. Both the police clearance and the drug screening costs will be reimbursed after hire. Other US Census employment requirements are as follows:

■ Must be at least 18 years old and a high school graduate or have a GED. Some people, however, may be hired at age 16 if they meet conditions of employment set by local laws and are high school graduates.

■ Be a U.S. citizen (However, if not a U.S. citizen, an applicant may be considered if qualified workers are still needed as translators or enumerators with special language skills)

■ Have a social security number before being appointed.

■ Must submit to the FBI fingerprint screening.

■ Pass a written test of basic skills

■ Have a valid driver's license (for most field jobs)

Applications can be picked up at the OPM office on Tinian and Rota and completed in advance of the Job Fair. Bring the completed application to the Job Fair, including a photocopy of a picture ID and high school diploma. If an application was submitted in advance of the Job Fair, Census staff will have a list of all applications submitted and will allow applicants to complete testing during the Job Fair on Rota and Tinian. Copies of an applicant's ID and high school diploma can also be added at the Job Fair.

Positions include enumerators or the people who actually go into the villages to collect the forms and follow-up, to supervisors who help manage the process. Other positions include field operations supervisors, crew leaders and crew leader assistants. Full time and part time positions are available and number of hours worked is dependent on the individual's job duties.

Some positions begin in early February but the majority will begin in mid-March. All information about job opportunities is posted on 2010 CNMI Census tab on the CNMI Department of Commerce website at http://www.commerce.gov.mp. Further information is also available by calling the Local Census Office at 288-3027/23. ***(PR)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

OES PTSA meeting

The PTSA Officers of Oleai Elementary School Would like to inform the parents and guardians of Oleai Elementary School that there will be a PTSA meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2009, at 6:15pm in the school cafeteria. Everyone is encouraged to attend. ***(PR)***

GCA to stage Christmas production

Grace Christian Academy will present their annual Christmas production this Friday, Dec. 11, 2009, at 6pm in the Grace Christian Academy auditorium. Admission is free and the public is invited to watch. *A Christmas Carol, Revisited* is about Tiny Tim who is all grown up and there are three ghosts who visit him: the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future. ***(PR)***

Pesticide applicators' workshop

There will be a workshop for agricultural pesticide applicators from Dec. 15 to 18, 2009, at the Rota NMC campus, from 8am to 4:30pm.

All commercial agriculture farmers, ranchers, gardeners and government agencies who use and apply general use and restricted use pesticides are urged to attend.

The workshop will focus on principles of pest control, pest biology, environment, math calibration, insects, and plant diseases, PPE' mixing and loading and local and federal laws on pesticide use. Participants who attend and complete the training course and pass the examinations will be eligible to be certified to purchase and apply restricted use pesticides.

This workshop is sponsored by the CNMI Division of Environmental Quality and Northern Marianas College, National Institute of Food and Agricultural, and CREES.

For more information, call Arnold Route (NMC-CREES) at 234-5498 Ext. 1432, DEQ's Reina Camacho at 664-8522, or Alejandro Badilles (NMC CREES Rota) at 532-9513 or 8279513. ***(PR)***

Red Cross Health & Safety Training

The American Red Cross announces the following health and safety training for the month December 2009:

Infant & Child CPR – Dec. 19, 2009, Saturday. 8am – 1pm

Adult CPR – Dec. 22, 2009, Tuesday, 6pm – 10pm

First Aid – Dec. 29, 2009, Tuesday, 6pm – 10pm

The training fee for Adult CPR and First Aid is $30 per person/per course and the training fee for the Infant & Child CPR is $35 per person. A participant's booklet is required. Participant's booklet is $5 each and is good for all three courses.

For more information, call the NMI Chapter Office at 234-3459. ***(PR)***

US military sets FDM training, live fire release

The U.S. military will be conducting live fire release and laser ops on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla. The schedule date and time are as follow:

Dec. 8-9, from 7am to 2:30pm, 20 EBS combat laser ops and inert/live fire release

Dec.8-9, from 1pm to 7pm, hsc-25, Laser ranging and designating

Dec. 10, from 7am to 3pm, 20 EBS combat laser ops and inert/live fire release

The general location of this activity will be on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla training area (R7201) on a 10 nautical mile radius on all quadrants.

Due to the danger imposed by this activity, the Emergency Management Office is strongly advising the public—especially fishermen, commercial pilots, and marine tour operators—to stay away from this area during the time and date indicated.

For more information, contact the EMO's Operations Section at telephone numbers 322-9528 and 322-9529, VHF MARINE CHNL 16, and HF Single Side Band Radio on 5.205.0. or dial CNMI 211. ***(EMO)***

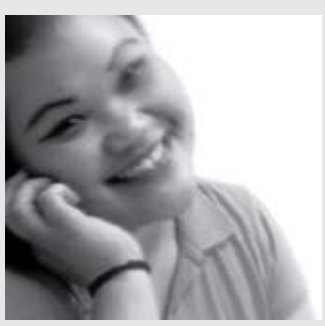
$350 donation to 215 ex-garment workers

The Garment Workers Trust Fund has received approval from the U.S. District Court to distribute a one-time donation of $350 to each of the 215 workers summated to the Fund by the CNMI Department of Labor and the Federal Ombudsman's Office.

The Funds will be available for distribution beginning Dec. 14, 2009, at 9am at the law office of Timothy H. Bellas, located in Garapan at the corner of Cactus Street and Botones Avenue.

All workers who are named on the list must appear personally and present acceptable picture identification in order to receive their check. Checks will not be disbursed to anyone other than the named recipient on the list provided by the above named government agencies. ***(PR)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday Ana Kim! May you always be blessed with many more birthdays. Continue to smile and enjoy every day! Greetings come from Dwayne and Camille and your good friend KUHWAT. We love you!

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday greetings go out to Calvin Jay Huliganga! Greetings come from your Mom, Dad, and your brother Casey.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy birthday greetings go out to Maricar Kisa! Have a wonderful day and may you have many more blessing to come! We love you! Greetings come from your loving husband, family, and friends

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy belated birthday to Tyreze "JUDE" Ngewakl! May the dear Lord continue to bless you and may all your wishes come true! Greetings come out from your loving family and your brothers and sisters (Techakl, Tyrell, Tyller, Trolii, Nolan, Eberdiil, Pia, and Tyeshia)!

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

Dec. 8, 1998

Bond tied to airport fees

A financial analysis conducted by an Ohio-based consultancy firm revealed that the Commonwealth Ports Authority would have to raise the airline landing fee and facilities service charge by mid-1999 to be able to meet debt service of the $35 million 1998 revenue bonds. The study which included projections in air traffic was conducted by Ricondo & Associates, Inc., in connection with the issuance of the CPA 1998 airport and seaport bonds. Due to the significant decrease in traffic to the CNMI as a result of Asia's financial crisis, "it is necessary to increase aviation fees and charges," the study said. Airline cost per enplanement is estimated to increase to a high of $11.94 in fiscal year 2000 from $9.21 in fiscal year 1998 because of low projection of enplanements until the year 2000, increase in debt service and projected additional operating expenses.

Reyes prefers shortened working time over pay cuts

The chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee yesterday cautioned the administration against a proposal to cut salary of the 5,000-strong government work force because of its potential impact on personal expenses. Rep. Karl T. Reyes said government payroll should be pared down only through reduction of work hours of its personnel where substantial savings can be made to meet shortfall in the fiscal budget estimated to reach at least $32.5 million by September next year.

Dec. 8, 1999

Oversight eyed on Saipan power plant

Lawmakers intend to get involved deeply into the controversial new power plant for Saipan with calls for oversight investigation and a legislative policy declaring the need for such a project amid attempt by Commonwealth Utilities Corporation to scale back the initial plan. House Speaker Diego T. Benavente yesterday raised the possibility of investigating into the project, saying the move to scrap the 80-megawatt will only damage the credibility of the CNMI government.

OPA asked to probe BDC

Commonwealth Development Authority Board Chair John S. Tenorio yesterday said he will ask the Office of the Public Auditor to look into how public funds were used by the Northern Marianas College's Business Development Center amid allegations of mismanagement. According to Mr. Tenorio, CDA is not satisfied with the way BDC has run the graduate internship program, which gets an annual funding from his office. This has led CDA to terminate the grant agreement with NMC-BDC this year which resulted in the loss of some $93,000 funding this year for the Center.

PATA eyes Chinese outbound market

In a move to widen the market base of the Micronesian region, the Pacific Asia Travel Association is planning to tap the huge tourism market in Mainland China, said Sharon Hannaford, PATA Pacific Division managing director. But the Northern Marianas, which has banned the entry PROC nationals into the Commonwealth, may just be left behind in the campaign of the region to develop the Chinese market. During the three-day PATA Micronesia Chapter meeting in Saipan, tourism officials from various islands in the region discussed how to exploit the Chinese outbound market and sell the different destinations in Micronesia.

Dec. 8, 2000

Cabrera guilty verdict upheld

Former Finance Secretary Antonio R. Cabrera lost his fight to reverse his conviction on corruption charges after U.S. District Judge Alex R. Munson yesterday upheld the guilty verdict returned by a jury. His motion seeking a judgment of acquittal on two charges was rejected following a 30-minute hearing in the federal court during which defense lawyer Joseph A. Arriola vainly argued the case on his behalf. Judge Munson said the jury had weighed the evidence presented at the trial last October and came up with a verdict that satisfied elements of the crime.

CPA extends airline incentive program

The Commonwealth Ports Authority has decided to extend the implementation of an incentive program that gives signatory airlines 50 percent discount on departure facility charge if they are able to bring their visitor traffic 15 percent above their current passenger haul. At the same time, the CPA Board of Directors approved the adjustment to existing departure facility charge from the current $8 per passenger to $6.35 beginning Jan. 1, 2001. The new rate will be in effect until Sept. 30, 2001.

4th Christmas Tree Decoration Contest

Dandan Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Garapan Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Grace Christian Academy

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Joshua Generation Academy

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kagman Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Koblerville Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Oleai Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Community School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The San Antonio Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tanapag Elementary School.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

San Vicente Elementary School

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The William S.Reyes Elementary School.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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MEMBER
The Associated Press Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Keeping guns from possible terrorists

Mayors Against Illegal Guns, a bipartisan coalition of roughly 500 U.S. mayors, has been pushing for smart and sensible law enforcement solutions to reduce the number of illegal guns obtained by criminals or would-be criminals. Last month, the mayors renewed their call for adoption of two relatively modest but potentially powerful proposals.

The first aims to close the so-called "terror gap" in existing gun laws by prohibiting anyone on the country's "no fly" list from being allowed to purchase a gun. Such a prohibition would allow the FBI to stop "people who are too dangerous to get on a plane from buying guns and explosives," said New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a co-founder of the mayors group. This proposal is a no-brainer.

A 2009 report by the General Accountability Office found 865 instances between 2004 and February 2009 where those on the terrorist watch list were able to buy a gun. The law currently bars convicted felons and immigrants who are in this country illegally, among others, from purchasing guns, but no mention is made of a suspected terrorist. Legislation to close this loophole, introduced by Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., has stalled.

The mayors are also arguing for elimination of a provision that forces the FBI to destroy within 24 hours any record of a background check performed on someone who passes the screening. The provision is part of the Tiahrt Amendment, a series of measures that place high hurdles in the way of law enforcement officials trying to discern where and when guns used in crimes were sold. Before the Tiahrt Amendment was passed, the FBI would routinely keep records of background checks on file for six months. Had this remained the practice, law enforcement agents who were tracking the activities of Maj. Nidal Hasan, the alleged gunman in the Fort Hood massacre, would have had the opportunity to see that he had purchased a weapon in August.

No one will ever know if knowledge of that purchase would have triggered an intervention that could have thwarted the Fort Hood attack. There should be no doubt, however, about the need for law enforcement officials to have access to this information.

(c) 2009, The Washington Post

For Obama, reducing goals list has been a priority

By DOYLE MCMANUS
(c) 2009, Los Angeles Times

McManus is a Times *columnist. He can be reached at doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com.*

Last week, Barack Obama did something unusual for a president: He acknowledged that he made mistakes in his first months. Even more surprising, he seems to have learned from them.

He didn't make an explicit confession; presidents don't relish displaying their lapses in judgment. But in his actions on two major issues—Afghanistan and the economy—Obama implicitly admitted that his initial decisions weren't perfect and sought to correct his course. And in a third, broader change, the president is now trying to keep his public focus on a few priorities at a time, not the dizzying list of goals that sometimes made his efforts look scattershot.

On Afghanistan, aides say Obama regrets the hasty decision he made in March to announce that the goal in Afghanistan was to defeat the Taliban and forge a stable democracy. Obama told columnists last week he realizes his initial definition of the mission was too grand and led his military commanders to "start viewing the mission expansively." Instead, he said, he wanted to define a "narrow mission"—not building a new Afghanistan, merely "ensuring enough stability that we're able to keep pressure on al-Qaida."

On the economy, Obama's position most of the year has been that the $787-billion stimulus Congress passed in February was all the major spending he could afford. But an unemployment rate at 10 percent has sent House Democrats into justified panic over their own jobs, so the White House reluctantly has agreed that something more is needed—as long as it doesn't cost too much and further deepen the deficit.

In a speech Tuesday, Obama will unveil a "surgical" plan that may include tax credits for businesses that create jobs, a "cash for caulkers" program to subsidize household energy conservation and an "infrastructure bank" to fund road and bridge construction.

Just as striking as Obama's policy shifts, though, is a third course correction in the White House: a commitment to focus on only a few issues at a time, at least publicly.

When Obama came to office, he announced a vaulting ambition to work on a long list of problems all at once: Yes he would focus on the economy but also on health care, energy, climate change, education and immigration; not only on Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran but also on the rest of the Muslim world, nuclear disarmament, Russia and Guantanamo.

Critics, including some Democrats, said he was spreading himself too thin. The president and his defenders replied, legitimately, that all those problems deserved attention. But the political impact was decisive: Voters began to ask whether a leader who made eight foreign trips in 10 months, more than any of his predecessors, was keeping his eye on the ball.

That's why the White House held an on-camera "job summit" Thursday—and why Vice President Joe Biden urged participants to forget that Obama had just spent months thinking about Afghanistan and health care.

"His laser focus," Biden said implausibly but loyally, has been "jobs, jobs, jobs, jobs."

In fact, Obama's fondness for domestic "summits"—he's sponsored no fewer than five—is another reflection of how many "top" priorities his White House has embraced. There's been a fiscal responsibility summit, a health care summit and an H1N1 preparedness summit. His secretary of Transportation even held a distracted-driving summit; that one, at least, didn't rate a visit from the president.

None of this is to say Obama has solved his focus problem completely. This week, after only a few days of laser-like concentration on the jobs issue, he'll fly to Norway to pick up his Nobel Peace Prize, then Denmark for (another) summit on climate change. Once again, diplomacy and circumstance have seized control of his schedule.

But Obama and his aides know that's not what they need. The president's next 10 months, one aide promised wryly, will see more trips to places like Pennsylvania and fewer to Scandinavia.

Obama still wishes he could do more. What he wants to be working on, he told columnists wistfully last week, is "improving our science and technology, making sure our schools work, getting serious about clean energy, fixing our health care system, stabilizing our deficit and our debt."

But events have forced him to perform triage on his priorities. A promised push for energy legislation is waiting for the health care debate to end. A promised attempt at immigration reform may never come.

Instead, the sprawling agenda has been boiled down to three top-tier items: jobs, health care, Afghanistan. If Obama succeeds at those, he'll be in a stronger position to tackle the rest of the list; if not, the rest won't matter.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Welfare reform fails its recession test

By PETER EDELMAN and BARBARA EHRENREICH
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

We all like to imagine that there'll be something to stop our fall if we hit hard times. Mulugeta Yimer, for example, is a 56-year-old Alexandria, Va., cabdriver who escaped poverty and persecution in Ethiopia 20 years ago only to be clobbered by the recession. Business is way down, and he's facing possible foreclosure on his home. He says he is averse to government handouts, but when he contemplates what might be in store for his wife, who works part-time at a convenience store, and their two young children, he muses wistfully, "There's always welfare, isn't there?"

Actually, no. When President Bill Clinton signed welfare reform into law, he didn't just end welfare as we knew it. For all practical purposes, he brought an end to cash help of any kind for families with children in much of the country. So while welfare reform was long ago declared a success in some quarters, it was deeply flawed from the beginning. The current recession shows once and for all just how flawed.

Conservatives had been attacking the old welfare system for decades, claiming that it fostered dependency. Many liberals found it unsatisfactory as well. Welfare checks weren't big enough to lift families out of poverty, and the system did little to help recipients get or keep jobs. When Republicans gained control of Congress and welfare rolls swelled in the early 1990s, these attacks gained momentum, until in 1996, Clinton ended the legal right to cash assistance and imposed a five-year limit on federally financed help to any given family.

Welfare reform also provided the states with nearly complete discretion over how to administer benefits. Most states, but not all, responded with gusto, reducing welfare rolls nationally by two-thirds in just a few years.

So when the Great Recession came along, the government safety net for families with children was in tatters. The United States was no more prepared for massive unemployment than New Orleans had been prepared for its levees to break. Some important government programs, including unemployment insurance and food stamps, have started to rise to the challenge and have even begun to lose their stigma among the formerly middle class. Unemployment insurance now covers 57 percent of those who have lost their jobs, as opposed to less than 40 percent before the recession—although their benefits amount to less half their former wages. Food stamp participation has expanded even more dramatically. While the average benefit isn't enough to meet people's basic nutritional needs, the program now serves 36 million people, double the number when Clinton left office and up by a third in the past year.

By contrast, the caseload for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the name we now give welfare) is about 5 million people. This number is up by about 1 million since the beginning of the recession, but it's still just a little over a third of what it was 15 years ago, before welfare reform.

Why the huge difference between unemployment insurance and food stamp usage and welfare caseloads? People have a legal right to food stamps if they meet the statutory requirements, but since 1996 there has been no legal right to cash assistance. And so welfare, generally speaking, has not cushioned the impact of the recession.

We can see the results: According to the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, the number of homeless Americans is up by 61 percent since the recession began in December 2007, and that figure will only continue to rise. The number of people living in poverty increased by 2.5 million during the first year of the recession, and it has surely risen further in 2009. The government reported recently that nearly 50 million Americans are experiencing what it delicately calls "food insecurity."

We are among the co-authors of a report from the Institute for Policy Studies titled "Battered by the Storm," to be released Monday, which documents the government's inadequate response to the human suffering caused by the recession and describes the excruciating choices people now face between feeding their families and paying the rent.

Both of us were critical of the new approach to welfare when it was enacted in 1996. One of us resigned from the government in protest of the law; the other helped organize opposition to it from within the women's movement. We warned that the legislation didn't provide adequate child care for single mothers thrown off welfare. We argued that the low-wage jobs available to former welfare recipients would not pay the bills. And we cautioned that many welfare recipients faced serious barriers to success in the job market.

But some advocates of welfare reform seemed to consider poverty a voluntary condition, one curable with a quick kick in the pants and the opportunity to work for minimum wage. There were not enough jobs even then, but, blinded by the economic boom of the 1990s, the authors of TANF seemed to think that the business cycle had been abolished and that prosperity would take us only onward and upward.

In the rapidly expanding service economy of the 1990s, many former welfare recipients did find jobs, but most did not escape poverty, and a significant number were pushed off the rolls without finding work. Research showed that one in five former recipients ultimately became totally disconnected from any means of support: They no longer had welfare, but they didn't have jobs. They hadn't married or moved in with a partner or family, and they weren't getting disability benefits. And so, after a decline in the late 1990s, the number of people living in extreme poverty (with an income less than half the poverty line, or below about $8,500 for a family of three) shot up by more than a third, from 12.6 million in 2000 to 17.1 million in 2008.

In some states TANF virtually disappeared—perhaps not surprisingly, given the states' new discretion and pressure from Washington to slash the rolls. Nationally, the fraction of poor children getting help plummeted from almost two-thirds to less than a third. A number of states reduced their welfare rolls by 90 percent.

With the recession that began at the end of 2001, thousands of women who'd been removed from the rolls found themselves without jobs or welfare. Beverly Ransom, for example—a Miami welfare reform "success story"—had found well-paying work in the catering business, until the recession took her job away and left her without employment prospects and unable to pay rent for herself and her two children on the meager assistance available to her. She eventually found help from a community organization fighting for welfare rights.

If 2001 and the months thereafter revealed holes in the safety net, the current crisis shows even more vividly that TANF is essentially irrelevant in large parts of the country. If the real purpose of welfare reform was simply to reduce the rolls, it's been a smashing success. Some states have been more responsive to economic conditions, but they are the exception. Even now, in the midst of the recession, caseloads in many states are tiny. At the end of last year, Wyoming had 281 families on its rolls—about 550 people. Idaho had 1,600 families, Oklahoma had 8,639, and Arkansas had 8,664. The share of poor families receiving TANF was 4 percent in Wyoming, 5 percent in Idaho, 9 percent in Illinois, 9 percent in Louisiana and 9 percent in Texas. Caseloads fell in 20 states during 2008.

Benefits are tiny, too, with 30 states paying a maximum benefit that's less than 30 percent of the federal poverty line. Mississippi skimps by offering its TANF recipients $170 a month for a family of three, about 11 percent of the poverty line and barely enough to cover the utility bills.

Nationwide, there has been no increase in federal welfare funding since the 1996 law was enacted, so thanks to inflation, the value of that funding has eroded by about a third. There is an emergency fund for TANF in the stimulus package Congress passed in February, but little of it has been spent, primarily because it requires a match that fiscally strapped states are unable to put on the table.

Most states have in effect adopted a welfare policy of pretending that the recession isn't happening. Fourteen of 24 states that responded to an Urban Institute survey this fall said they had not changed any of their TANF policies or practices in response to higher unemployment.

There are two techniques that allowed states to radically reduce welfare rolls over the past decade, and they are being used to keep the rolls down now, even as need escalates. The first is to shut the front door almost completely through a process called "diversion"—essentially telling someone: "You look able-bodied. Go out and look for a job." The Urban Institute's analysis showed that 42 states have rules that discourage enrollment, such as requiring an extensive job search, even when there are obviously no jobs to be found. For a person without a car or access to public transportation, a requirement to apply for dozens of jobs before an application for welfare will even be considered, as some states and counties mandate, can be a deal-breaker.

In some states, according to Kaaryn Gustafson of the University of Connecticut law school, "applying for welfare is a lot like being booked for a crime." There may be a mug shot, fingerprinting and lengthy interrogations as to one's children's true paternity. Word gets around, and, even in the face of destitution, many people are too proud to undergo such indignities.

The other technique for keeping the rolls down is to staff the back door with the equivalent of a nightclub bouncer. The practice is called "sanctioning"—kicking people off the rolls because they were late to a work assignment (no excuses accepted, whether for sick children, late buses or car trouble) or didn't show up for an appointment at the welfare office (no dispensation for failure to receive notice of an appointment or inability to understand English). In some states multiple infractions of this sort can result in lifetime disqualification.

It's time to acknowledge that America's 1996 experiment with welfare reform was based on reckless assumptions about the economy, as well as a callous disregard for the realities of sustaining a family. We need a massive emergency relief package not only to fund new jobs but to repair the grievous holes in our national safety net. Fifty million people need help now—not in three months or six months, but today.

Peter Edelman is a professor at Georgetown Law Center and served as an assistant secretary of Health and Human Services in the Clinton administration. Barbara Ehrenreich's most recent book is Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America. *They are among the co-authors of* Battered by the Storm, *a report to be released Monday by the Institute for Policy Studies.*

Letter to the Editor

No deal with governor on improved status

The meeting was nothing like what Wendy described in her letter to the editor. The meeting was informal consultation to get workers' views on post-federalization changes to CNMI labor law and discuss strategy for obtaining improved status for aliens in the CNMI. It was one of many such meetings worker leaders have had with Ms. Siemer over the past months.

The attorney present was Steve Woodruff whose unwavering commitment to and major achievements in protecting the interests of aliens in the CNMI is well known to literally thousands of foreign workers.

Ms. Siemer told us what she was planning to do in Washington, D.C., relative to comprehensive immigration reform, which is on President Barrack Obama's and the Democratic Party's Legislative agenda for next year. She did this entirely on her own initiative and did not put any conditions on it. She also was completely open about what Gov. Benigno R. Fitial's goals are.

It is absolutely untrue that workers were told to be "quiet." Ms. Siemer stated her views on what works and what does not—as she always does in many consultations she has had with us. It is entirely up to us what we do. Ms. Siemer believes that attacking the governor or holding big demonstrations creates a political backlash that can result in the governor actively opposing worker goals.

The point is that workers have a better chance of getting improved status within the framework of national immigration reform than independently.

There was no deal offered for governor's or Deanne's support. In, fact Ms. Siemer made it clear that the governor would not actively support improved status for aliens in the CNMI. As long as the conditions remained favorable, however, she indicated he would not oppose opening a pathway to citizenship for CNMI aliens through comprehensive immigration reform.

Attorney Woodruff emphasized that workers should constantly reevaluate the situation and pursue their objectives in the most effective way based on such continuous reassessment.

The claim that workers were being asked not to sign the petition is absolutely *false*. On the contrary, attorney Woodruff emphasized that everyone was free to sign the petition and that the following strategy recommended by Ms. Siemer did *not* mean one should not sign the petition. Signing the petition entails no risk to the suggested strategy. Everyone is welcome to sign the petition.

Boni V. Sagana
Advocate/Dekada president

The Weather

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲87° ▼78°	▲86° ▼78°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°	▲86° ▼77°

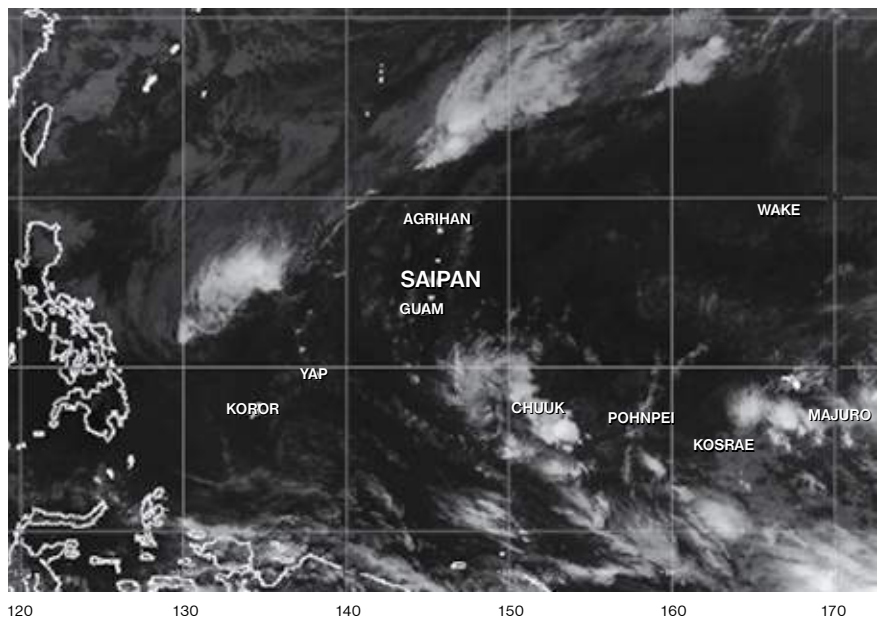
Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Showers	▲88	▼77
Palau	Showers	▲88	▼77
Yap	Showers	▲88	▼77
Chuuk	Rain	▲87	▼77
Pohnpei	Showers	▲88	▼77
Kosrae	Rain	▲87	▼76
Majuro	Showers	▲85	▼77

Around The Globe

Auckland	Sunny	▲75	▼62
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲43	▼19
Hong Kong	Showers	▲70	▼65
Honolulu	Sunny	▲80	▼66
London	Showers	▲50	▼48
Los Angeles	Cloudy	▲58	▼42
Manila	Showers	▲85	▼74
Melbourne	Showers	▲66	▼51
Miami	Mostly Sunny	▲84	▼72
New York	Cloudy	▲48	▼34
Osaka	Partly Sunny	▲53	▼38
Paris	Showers	▲46	▼44
Pusan	Mostly Cloudy	▲53	▼41
Rome	Showers	▲58	▼44
Salem	Mostly Sunny	▲34	▼16
San Francisco	Cloudy	▲50	▼35
Seoul	Rain	▲41	▼34
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲55	▼46
Washington, DC	Cloudy	▲45	▼36

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2009
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A shear line extends northeastward from a weak circulation northwest of Palau centered near 12N132E to 20N142E to beyond 25N at 155E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms are within 75 miles of a line from 14N132E to 16N135E and in an area from 22N145E to 25N153E to 25N144E back to 22N144E. Cloudiness and patchy rain are also found along and up to 300 miles northwest of a line from 10N131E to 18N139E to 25N155E. A monsoon trough extends northeastward from 2N130E through a circulation southeast of Palau near 4N137E then eastward past Tarawa to end near 1N177E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are near Chuuk within 150 miles of a line from 9N148E to 4N154E and near Majuro within 75 miles of a line from 7N166E to 7N174E and along the equator south of 2N from 162E to 166E and from 175E to 180.

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
3:35 AM Today	High Tide:	1.4 Feet
8:58 PM Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
3:20 PM Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
10:31 PM Today	Low Tide:	0.2 Feet

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:31 AM	5:46 PM
Wednesday	6:32 AM	5:47 PM
Thursday	6:32 AM	5:47 PM
Friday	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Saturday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	11:47 PM	11:34 AM
Wednesday		12:15 AM
Thursday	12:42 PM	12:55 AM
Friday	1:36 PM	1:36 AM
Saturday	2:30 PM	2:18 AM

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- BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
  A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
- BUSINESS
  Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
- SAMU'T SARI
  Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
- TRAVELOGUE
  Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- COMMUNITY BRIEFS
  Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN
  Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

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- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
- Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
- Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
- For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

For announcements:

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- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan
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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 7, 2009

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

C09597	11:30am	12:05pm	1, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM

C09597	12:40pm	1:10pm	1, 7

SAIPAN-GUAM

C09317	4:45am	5:35am	Daily
C09313	8:30am	9:20am	Daily
C09597	11:30am	1:10pm	1, 7 via ROP
C09601	12:20pm	1:10pm	4, 5
C09603	3:15pm	4:05pm	Daily
C09605	6:20pm	7:10pm	Daily
C09599	9:20pm	10:10pm	Daily

SAIPAN-NAGOYA (NGO)

NW287	6:00am	7:30pm	Daily via NRT

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

NW287	6:00am	8:40am	Daily
NW297	4:45pm	7:30pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:20am	6:50am	1, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ604	2:10am	6:00am	1
OZ604	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
OZ606	3:20pm	7:00pm	2, 4, 6, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

FM844	2:50am	5:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

CZ3008	3:30am	6:40am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ604/701	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ604/701	2:40am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ604/703	2:50am	11:25am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ608/705	3:20am	1:30am+1	1, 5 via PUS
C09603/933	3:15pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09605/933	6:20pm	9:40pm	Daily via GUM
C09599/PR111	9:20pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM

SAIPAN-HONG KONG

OZ604/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN
OZ604/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
OZ606/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	4, 6, 7 via ICN

ARRIVALS

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

C09598	3:30am	4:05am	5, 6
C09312	1:20pm	1:55pm	6

GUAM-ROTA (ROP)

C09598	2:20am	2:50am	5, 6
C09312	12:10pm	12:40pm	6

GUAM-SAIPAN

C09316	2:00am	2:30am	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
C09598	2:20am	4:05am	5, 6 via ROP
C09596	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C09600	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7
C09312	12:10pm	1:55pm	6 via ROP
C09602	1:50pm	2:40pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C09604	4:50pm	5:40pm	Daily
C09606	8:00pm	8:50pm	Daily

NAGOYA (NGO)-SAIPAN

NW288	12:05pm	1:20am+1	Daily via NRT

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

NW298	10:05am	2:50pm	Daily
NW288	8:45pm	1:20am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:00pm	2:10am+1	4, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ605	9:00am	2:20pm	2, 4, 6, 7
OZ603	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ603	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

FM843	7:15pm	1:50am+1	1, 5

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

CZ3007	7:30pm	2:40am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

OZ716/605	12:30am	2:20pm	4 via ICN
OZ706/607	3:35am	2:10am+1	4, 7 via PUS
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/603	1:10pm	1:30am+1 via ICN	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
PR110/C09596	10:10pm	7:50am+1 via GUM	1, 3, 5, 6, 7
C0934/9596	11:10pm	7:50am+1	Daily via GUM
OZ704/605	11:55pm	2:20pm+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via ICN

HONG KONG-SAIPAN

OZ724/605	12:30am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ750/605	1:00am	2:20pm	2,4,6,7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/603	1:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; FM: Shanghai Airlines; PR: Philippine Airlines; NW: Northwest; OZ: Asiana
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota			
FRE 100	7:00am	7:30am	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 100	7:50am	8:20am	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 200	9:00am	9:30am	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 200	9:50am	10:15am	Daily
Guam-Rota			
FRE 300	4:00pm	4:30pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan			
FRE 300	4:50pm	5:25pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota			
FRE 400	6:00pm	6:30pm	Daily
Rota-Guam			
FRE 400	6:45pm	7:15pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian			
FRE 101	6:45am	6:55am	Daily
FRE 103	7:30am	7:40am	Daily
FRE 105	8:00am	8:10am	Daily
FRE 107	8:40am	8:50am	Daily
FRE 109*	9:10am	9:20am	Daily
FRE 111*	10:45am	10:55am	Daily

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily

Business

Jobless professionals vie for holiday sales work

By CHRISTOPHER LEONARD and MAE ANDERSON
AP BUSINESS WRITERS

Mara Proctor used to design limestone hearths and columns for luxury homes near Kansas City, drawing on her college education and six years of training.

These days, she's leading customers around a store that sells sculptured snowmen and Santa figurines.

It isn't by choice. Until a few weeks ago, Proctor was among the record 5.9 million Americans who have been jobless for at least six months. Now she belongs to a subset of that group: Out-of-work professionals and managers, engineers and teachers who have turned, in desperation, to holiday-season jobs as sales clerks.

Retailers report a surge in applications this year from professionals who had never applied for such jobs before.

"You'll find Wall Street stock brokers and small business owners trying to find temporary retail jobs during the holidays," said Ellen Davis, vice president of the National Retail Federation.

The pay is low, the jobs temporary. And the work is hardly equal to their experience or expertise. Yet the nation's unemployment crisis left these people jobless so much longer than they'd expected that many count themselves fortunate to have anything.

Laid off eight months ago, Proctor said she figured, "OK, I'll do the unemployment thing for a couple of weeks and get a new job."

"It was very naive," she said. "You start calling all your contacts, and you find out they're all laid off, too, so your contacts list doesn't mean anything."

In a bleak labor market, holiday-season hiring has meant at least a respite for many long-term unemployed. Not that it's easy to land even these jobs. Most retailers have cut back. And overall in the economy, six applicants, on average, are competing for each opening—compared with just 1.7 workers per opening when the recession began in December 2007.

For the stores, though, the availability of clerks with experience managing or working effectively with co-workers is a luxury. They've been able to cull the excellent from the merely qualified.

"It enables us to be somewhat more selective and hire a higher-caliber" clerk, said Glenn Album, vice president of human resources at Toys R Us. Album said the company this year has hired, among others, former teachers and an accountant.

"What's great with the higher-caliber team members is there is much, much better service in the store," he said.

On a cold morning before Thanksgiving, Proctor jangled a set of keys and opened the Sticks boutique for business at the Country Club Plaza shopping district in Kansas City. When she was laid off in March, the notion of a retail job didn't even cross her mind.

At 32, she had spent six years hopping easily from job to job in the home-design business, seeking out higher responsibilities and pay with each move. Last year, she worked for a contractor, using computer drafting programs to draw floor plans.

AP

In this photo taken Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009, Mara Proctor arranges merchandise at Sticks boutique in Kansas City, Mo. Proctor is among the legions of workers finding temporary relief from unemployment with a seasonal job.

After her layoff, she thought she'd be marketable. But the market had collapsed. By late summer, Proctor had burned through much of her personal savings.

She leapt at the chance to work temporarily as manager of a Sticks location, selling handmade wooden sculptures. Still, the job lasts only until Jan. 6. After that, she'll be unemployed again.

Retailers pay their sales clerks an average of about $13 an hour, the government estimates. Proctor declined to say how much she's paid, beyond saying it's well below what she earned as a designer. But it's more than the $400 a week she'd been collecting in unemployment benefits.

At Hoffman's Chocolates in Greenacres, Fla., the lavish holiday display of Christmas lights, toy trains and a robotic Santa Claus draws onlookers each year. But finding skilled workers for the holiday rush used to be difficult, said CEO Fred Meltzer.

Until this year. When it posted 45 jobs in its chocolate factory and on the sales floor, Hoffman's received 550 applications. Some came from people laid off by the circulation department of the Palm Beach Post. Others had worked for law firms. Another was Lisa Pagan, a former department store manager.

Once she heard Hoffman's was hiring, Pagan said she put on her best job-interview outfit—just to drop off her resume. She landed a position that pays less than half what she made last year as a department-store manager. But after a year of unemployment, Pagan, a 38-year-old divorced mother of two, isn't complaining.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Chinese wind power companies target global markets

BEIJING (AP)—China's Goldwind Science & Technology Ltd. is one of the world's biggest makers of wind turbines—a cornerstone of the booming clean power business—but is unknown outside its home country. Goldwind aims to change that. In a Minnesota farmer's cornfield, the company is erecting three 20-story-tall windmills in its first American project and hopes it will help to woo other buyers. "There are a lot of leads and we are following them up," said Kerry Zhou, Goldwind's director of development. "We certainly expect that by 2011 we can get good results." China's market for wind equipment is on track to overtake the U.S. this year as the world's largest, spurred by a government campaign to promote renewable energy to clean up its battered environment and curb surging demand for foreign oil and gas.

Kuwait sells Citigroup stake for $4.1 billion

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—Kuwait's sovereign wealth fund said Sunday it booked a profit of $1.1 billion by selling the stake it took in Citigroup Inc. less than two years ago when the banking giant was strapped for cash. The Kuwait Investment Authority said in a statement it sold the preferred shares after converting them to common stock for $4.1 billion. That works out to a gain of nearly 37 percent on its $3 billion investment. Calls to the Kuwait fund for further details went unanswered. A Citi spokesman declined to comment. Gulf Arab nations' sovereign wealth funds have been heavy investors in U.S. and European companies, using their oil wealth to buy large stakes in companies ranging from Citi to Germany's Volkswagen AG and Mercedes-Benz parent Daimler AG.

Drive for geothermal power heats up on US campuses

MILWAUKEE (AP)—While solar and wind power get most of the headlines, geothermal power is quietly gaining traction on college campuses where energy costs can siphon millions each year from the budget. Schools from Wisconsin to New Mexico have geothermal projects in the works. There are 46 schools divvying up millions in federal stimulus dollars to advance technology that uses the temperature of the Earth, rather than coal-fired power plants, to heat and cool buildings. So far this year, the Department of Energy has announced $400 million in grants to advance geothermal projects like those under way on a handful of campuses. Geothermal technology has been around for decades, it works and it's increasingly affordable. At colleges that must maintain dozens of large buildings, the savings are magnified.

Administration to slash bailout cost estimate

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Obama administration plans to cut its estimate of the projected costs of the government bailout program by more than $200 billion, a Treasury official said Sunday.

The official said the administration now believes the cost of the program will be at least $200 billion below the $341 billion estimate it made in August.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the administration's new projection has not been presented to Congress, said the reduced cost estimate reflected faster repayments by big banks and less spending on some of the programs.

The administration's estimate that the $700 billion financial rescue program will cost at most $141 billion is down sharply from the estimate of $341 billion made in the administration's mid-session budget review in August.

The official said the new estimate will become part of the administration's new budget, which President Barack Obama will present to Congress in February.

The $700 billion financial rescue program, known as the Troubled Asset Relief Program, was passed by Congress in October 2008 at the height of the worst financial crisis to hit the country since the 1930s.

Obama is scheduled to give a speech on the economy Tuesday and it is possible that he will raise the idea of using repaid TARP funds for increased efforts to help the unemployed.

Republicans have voiced opposition to this approach, arguing that the money should be used to lower the government's ballooning deficits.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has told Congress he hopes to end the bailout program as soon as possible.

Traders facing Fed, dollar questions this week

NEW YORK (AP)—Be careful what you wish for.

Investors have been hoping for signs that the economy is strong enough to justify continuing Wall Street's nine-month rally. They got the surest evidence yet Friday when the government said employers cut fewer jobs in November than at any time since the recession began in late 2007.

But the good news is making many investors uneasy. Traders are asking whether the strengthening economy will lead the Federal Reserve to start raising rates or scale back its stimulus measures, and whether the dollar, responding to higher rates, will reverse its long slide.

Low rates and a weak dollar have helped feed stocks' comeback. So, what happens now depends on where traders think they can make the most money: in stocks as companies make more profits in a stronger economy, or in other investments like the dollar whose returns will improve as rates rise.

"The Fed was forcing people to take risks," buying stocks and commodities to boost their returns, said Justin Golden, a strategist at Macro Risk Advisors.

You've Got Freedom: AOL ends ties with Time Warner

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—AOL is shaking loose from Time Warner Inc. and heading into the next decade the way it began this one, as an independent company. Unlike in the 1990s, though, when AOL got rich selling dial-up Internet access, it starts the 2010s as an underdog, trying to beef up its Web sites and grab more advertising revenue.

Despite a few bright spots in its portfolio of sites, such as tech blog Engadget, AOL has a long way to go until Web advertising can replace the revenue it still gets from selling dial-up Internet access. One especially popular property, entertainment site TMZ, is a joint venture with a Time Warner unit that will keep TMZ and its revenue after AOL splits off.

Now investors are getting a chance to place bets on AOL. On Wednesday, Time Warner shareholders as of Nov. 27 will get one share of AOL for every 11 of their Time Warner shares. The next morning, AOL CEO Tim Armstrong is set to ring the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange, and AOL will begin trading under the ticker symbol of the same name—the one it had when it was known as America Online and used $147 billion worth of its inflated stock to buy Time Warner in 2001.

Nation

Pearl Harbor survivor back for 1st time since war

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP)—Ed Johann will always remember the sound of planes diving out of the sky to bomb U.S. battleships, the explosions and the screams of sailors. He still recalls the stench of burning oil and flesh.

The 86-year-old retired firefighter is due to return Monday to Pearl Harbor for the first time since World War II to attend a ceremony marking the 68th anniversary of the Japanese attack.

"I really don't know how I'm going to handle it," said Johann, from his home in Oregon. "When I think about it, all I have is unpleasantness. I'm sure it's not like that now."

Johann was a teenage apprentice seaman on Dec. 7, 1941. He had enlisted in the Navy only five months earlier so his parents, who picked and packed tomatoes and other crops in California's San Fernando Valley, wouldn't have to support him.

He and two other sailors were waiting to ferry passengers on a small boat to and from the USS Solace, a hospital ship that was moored in Pearl Harbor, when they saw the Japanese planes.

They first thought they were U.S. aircraft conducting drills until they saw explosions and flames from the stricken ships.

Johann's motor launcher boat rushed to the USS Arizona, which was hit by several bombs, one of which struck her forward ammunition magazines and set off a massive explosion. Already fueled and manned when the attack began, their 30-foot boat was the first rescue vessel to arrive at the scene.

They found the water littered with people—some wounded, some dead, some unharmed. Many were covered in the leaking oil from the ships.

AP

In this October 2009 Web site photo provided by Jan Jackson of www.countrytraveleronline.com, Ed Johann reflects on the Navy medals of honor in his Lincoln City, Ore., home. He earned the medals as a 17-year-old sailor on duty in Pearl Harbor on the morning it was attacked, Dec. 7, 1941.

They loaded as many as they could and delivered them to the hospital ship before returning to the USS West Virginia for more.

"As we're pulling them out of the water, a lot of times the skin would come right off the arm," Johann said. "They would just be black with oil, except maybe you could see the white of their eyes."

The planes kept coming. Dive-bombers plunged out of the sky, dropping bombs and strafing the water and ships with machine gun fire before roaring back up for another round. Torpedo bombers flew in level to drop their submersible weapons for underwater assaults.

The burning, sinking vessels at first lowered men into Johann's makeshift rescue boat. But some sailors started to panic and jump into their small ship, forcing it to pull away so it wouldn't sink too.

"Some of the sailors would be like in shock and some of 'em would be like going out of control, screaming and hollering," Johann said.

The next morning—after nervously worrying the Japanese planes would return—Johann's boat unloaded men from the Solace who failed to make it through the night and delivered them to land.

"We had them stacked like cordwood in our boat. The open end where the feet was sticking out was these big brown tags that said 'unknown, unknown,'" Johann said. The military hadn't adopted dog tags yet and many couldn't be identified.

The attack sank four U.S. battleships and destroyed 188 U.S. planes. Another four battleships were damaged, along with three cruisers and three destroyers.

More than 2,200 sailors, Marines and soldiers were killed.

"We didn't survive by any skill," Johann said of his boat. "It was just luck, pure luck. Because all we were concentrating on was trying to save people, and not save ourselves."

2nd gay bishop for Episcopal Church and Anglicans

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles has elected a lesbian as assistant bishop, the second openly gay bishop in the global Anglican fellowship, which is already deeply fractured over the first.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, spiritual leader of the world's 77 million Anglicans, said Sunday that the choice raised "very serious questions" for the divided church and urged restraint.

The Rev. Mary Glasspool of Baltimore needs approval from a majority of dioceses across the church before she can be consecrated as assistant bishop in the Los Angeles diocese.

Still, her victory Saturday underscored a continued Episcopal commitment to accepting same-sex relationships despite enormous pressure from other Anglicans to change their stand.

"Any group of people who have been oppressed because of any one, isolated aspect of their persons yearns for justice and equal rights," Glasspool said in a statement, thanking the diocese for choosing her.

Obama urges Dems to pass health care overhaul

WASHINGTON (AP)—Casting health care overhaul as a legacy for the American people and failure as politically unthinkable, President Barack Obama on Sunday rallied Senate Democrats to deliver on their party's half-century quest to expand the social safety net by providing access for all.

At the Capitol during a rare Sunday session of the Senate, Obama delivered a closed-door pep talk to the fractious Democratic caucus that lasted about 45 minutes. Deep divisions remain over abortion coverage, but there was hope for compromise on whether the government should directly offer health insurance in competition with private companies.

"They're going to get it done," Obama said as he left. He avoided specifics in the meeting with senators and took no questions.

The health care legislation—Obama's signature domestic policy goal—would provide coverage to more than 30 million additional people over the next decade with a new requirement for nearly everyone to purchase insurance. There would be new marketplaces where people could shop for and compare insurance plans, and lower-income people would get subsidies to help them afford coverage.

Obama

The federal-state Medicaid program for the poor would be expanded, and there would be a ban on unpopular insurance company practices such as denying coverage based on medical history.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who had invited Obama, sounded confident.

Republicans "want this to be, as one senator said, President Obama's Waterloo," Reid told reporters. "And it's not going to be."

White House spokesman Bill Burton said Obama thanked lawmakers for their work and encouraged them to move ahead on "this historic opportunity." Democrats are keenly aware of former President Bill Clinton's failure to pass health care legislation in 1994, and their repudiation at the polls that November.

Obama said this is "the most significant social legislation in decades—so don't lose it," said Sen. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn. Obama was accompanied by Vice President Joe Biden and other senior administration officials.

Ohio inmate to get 1-drug, slower, execution

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—Condemned killer Kenneth Biros could become the first person in the country put to death with a single dose of an intravenous anesthetic instead of the usual—and faster-acting—three-drug process if his execution proceeds Tuesday.

The execution could propel other states to eventually consider the switch, which proponents say ends arguments over unnecessary suffering during injection. California and Tennessee previously considered then rejected the one-drug approach.

Though the untested method has never been used on an inmate in the United States, one difference is clear: Biros will likely die more slowly than inmates put to death with the three-drug method, which includes a drug that stops the heart.

Lethal injection experts on both sides of the debate over injection say thiopental sodium, which kills by putting people so deeply asleep they stop breathing, will take longer.

How much longer is unclear: Mark Dershwitz, an anesthesiologist who advised Ohio on its switch to the single drug, has written death should occur in under 15 minutes.

ACROSS THE NATION

1 shot, another beaten in fight at Baltimore hotel

BALTIMORE (AP)—One man was shot in the face and another was severely beaten when a fight erupted early Sunday during a birthday party at a downtown Baltimore hotel, police said. A woman had rented two adjoining hotel rooms for a birthday party with about 20 young adults when a fight broke out between two 19-year-old men, Raymond Woodland and Marquis Johnson, police said. It's unclear what started the fight, Baltimore police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said. Guglielmi said Woodland pulled out a Tech-9 semiautomatic machine pistol and fired one shot, striking Johnson in the face. Then two of Johnson's friends took the gun, held Woodland down and severely beat him, police said.

Men, horses killed in Ohio barn fire are mourned

LEBANON, Ohio (AP)—Stunned horse owners, trainers and stable hands visited the blackened site Sunday where a barn fire killed two workers and 43 horses at a harness-racing track in southwest Ohio. Warren County fairgrounds officials quickly hired excavators to pile up twisted metal and charred wood debris and remove the horses' bodies late in the aftermath of the early Saturday blaze that quickly consumed Barn No. 16 at Lebanon Raceway. Fire investigators have ruled out criminal intent, but indicated they haven't determined what caused the fire. Warren Fair Board member Chris Lutmer said officials wanted to quickly remove the horse remains to ease anxiety—he said for most owners and workers, the horses were like members of the family. "We wanted to get them out as quickly as possible so people didn't have to look at them," Lutmer said. "It's just like your pet lying down there. You see them almost every day."

Scientists, lawyers mull effects of home robots

PALO ALTO, Calif. (AP)—Eric Horvitz illustrates the potential dilemmas of living with robots by telling the story of how he once got stuck in an elevator at Stanford Hospital with a droid the size of a washing machine. "I remembered thinking, `Whoa, this is scary,' as it whirled around, almost knocking me down," the Microsoft researcher recalled. "Then, I thought, 'What if I were a patient?' There could be big issues here." We're still far from the sci-fi dream of having robots whirring about and catering to our every need. But little by little, we'll be sharing more of our space with robots in the next decade, as prices drop and new technology creates specialized machines that clean up spilled milk or even provide comfort for an elderly parent."

Asia

RP massacre suspects face rebellion raps

SHARIFF AGUAK, Philippines (AP)—Prosecutors drew up additional charges of rebellion Monday against members of a powerful southern clan suspected in the Philippines' worst political massacre, as troops uncovered more hidden weapons.

Civil rights groups were set to challenge at the Supreme Court President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's declaration of martial law in Maguindanao province, which authorized thousands of troops to make arrests without court warrants and crack down on the Ampatuan clan and its private army.

■ ■ ■

SHARIFF AGUAK, Philippines (AP)—Officials say Philippine police have clashed with gunmen loyal to a powerful clan accused in the country's worst political massacre.

National police chief Jesus Verzosa says there were no causualties Sunday in the first reported violence since the government put southern Maguindanao province under martial law.

He says about 20-30 suspected followers of the Ampatuan clan opened fire on police in Datu Unsay township, near the site of the Nov. 23 killing of 57 people traveling in an election convoy.

Verzosa says more than 2,400 gunmen have massed up in 16 of Maguindanao's 22 townships to defend the Ampatuan clan, which has ruled the province unopposed for years.

Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno says officials are trying to persuade them to disarm.

■ ■ ■

Andal Ampatuan Sr., the clan's patriarch and former governor who has ruled unopposed for years, has been arrested with at least six other family members and about 60 followers on suspicion of planning and carrying out the Nov. 23 killing of 57 people — including 30 journalists and their staff — traveling in a convoy of a political rival. The Ampatuans have denied involvement.

Ampatuan's son, Andal Ampatuan Jr., who turned himself in last month, is the only one charged with multiple counts of murder. Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera said prosecutors would file murder charges against the other Ampatuans who were arrested over the weekend, as well as additional charges of rebellion for allegedly organizing armed resistance.

Thirty-nine firearms and crates of ammunition were dug up Sunday at a farm believed owned by the Ampatuans near the provincial capital of Shariff Aguak, army Brig. Gen. Gaudencio Pangilinan said. Other stockpiles, including mortar shells, were retrieved last week outside the Ampatuans' compound. Officials said the weapons, some stamped with Defense Department markings, were enough to arm a battalion.

Army troops and police said they were pursuing about 4,000 armed followers of the Ampatuans, some reportedly massing in eight Maguindanao towns. Security forces sealed off Maguindanao's exit points and mounted checkpoints, police Director Andres Caro said.

Pangilinan told reporters the gunmen were capable of carrying out bombings, arson attacks and abductions.

White House still lacks solid intel on bin Laden

WASHINGTON (AP)—Osama bin Laden may be slipping back and forth from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Or the U.S. might not have a clue, more than eight years after the al-Qaida leader masterminded the terrorist attacks on America.

Given a chance Sunday to clear away some of the mystery surrounding the whereabouts of the world's most wanted terrorist, Obama administration officials seemed to add to it with what appeared to be conflicting assessments.

President Barack Obama's national security adviser, James Jones, said bin Laden, believed hiding mainly in a rugged area of western Pakistan, may be periodically slipping back into Afghanistan. But Obama's Pentagon chief, Robert Gates, said the U.S. has lacked good intelligence on bin Laden for a long time—"I think it has been years"—and did not confirm that he'd slipped into Afghanistan.

The failed hunt for bin Laden has been one of the signature frustrations of the global war on terrorism that former President George W. Bush launched after the Sept. 11 attacks. The main explanation given by both the Bush and Obama administrations for not getting bin Laden is that they simply don't know where he is.

"If we did, we'd go get him," Gates said.

Jones, a retired Marine general, stressed the urgency of targeting bin Laden, and spoke of a renewed campaign to capture or kill him. Bin Laden had been sheltered in Afghanistan by Taliban allies while plotting the Sept. 11 attacks. When U.S. forces ousted the Taliban in late 2001, bin Laden fled into Pakistan from his mountain redoubt.

Asked on CNN's "State of the Union" whether the administration has reliable intelligence on bin Laden's whereabouts, Jones replied, "The best estimate is that he is somewhere in North Waziristan, sometimes on the Pakistani side of the border, sometimes on the Afghan side of the border." He did not comment on the intelligence behind that estimate, nor did he cite a time period or describe more specifically bin Laden's apparent border crossings.

US envoy discusses NKorea trip with SKorean envoy

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—President Barack Obama's special envoy conferred with South Korean officials Monday on the eve of a rare trip to North Korea aimed at bringing the communist country back to international nuclear disarmament talks.

Stephen Bosworth's three-day visit to Pyongyang starting Tuesday represents the first bilateral talks between the U.S. and the North since Obama took office in January. The two countries last met one-on-one on the sidelines of now-stalled six-nation nuclear talks in Beijing in December 2008.

On Monday, Bosworth met with South Korea's chief nuclear envoy, Wi Sung-lac, to discuss the upcoming trip. He told Wi that the U.S. intentionally decided to start the North Korea trip from South Korea—a remark seen as meaning that the two allies are working closely together.

"It's not an accident. We intended that," Bosworth told Wi at the start of their meeting.

Further details of their discussions were not immediately made available.

Bosworth is scheduled to fly to the North from a U.S. air base near Seoul. While in Pyongyang, he is expected to meet with First Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju—the country's top nuclear strategist and leader Kim Jong Il's chief foreign policy brain, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

North Korea has pushed for direct talks with the U.S. since it pulled out of the nuclear negotiations in protest of international criticism of a rocket launch in April.

LANTERN RECORD AP

Muslim women take part in an attempt to break a world record for the most sky lanterns flown simultaneously in Jakarta, Indonesia, late Saturday, Dec. 5, 2009. At least 10,000 lanterns were released into the sky to break the world record, organizer said.

Kashmir's anonymous graves summon dark days of war

BIMYAR, India (AP)—He left home on a rainy Wednesday morning, walking through the gate of his solid middle-class house and into the narrow streets of Srinagar, Kashmir's largest city. He needed to pick up some medicine for his elderly father.

It was the summer of 1996. Ali Mohammad Mir was 40 years old, a gentle-spoken building contractor and a father of three. In a lush Himalayan valley savaged by cycles of guerrilla attacks and government crackdowns, a place where politics and violence almost always went together, he was utterly apolitical. Desperately nonpolitical.

His family never saw him again.

Here, in this quiet mountain village about 60 miles away, is where Mir may have ended up, in a grave marked only by a mound of dirt, surrounded by the graves of hundreds of other unidentified men. Or perhaps he's in the cluster of unmarked graves in the forests of Parra-Gagarhill, or among the bodies buried in the cow pasture in the village of Kichama.

"He is out there somewhere," said Mir's son, Zahoor Ahmad Mir. He has spent years researching his father's final hours, and now believes he was killed by a militia tied to the Indian army. "They killed him and they threw him aside. Now he is buried somewhere. He must be."

Dozens of these anonymous burial fields have been identified by human rights workers over the past 18 months, nameless graveyards where Indian security forces dumped nearly 2,400 nameless corpses.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Pakistan court starts hearing case against amnesty

ISLAMABAD (AP)—Pakistan's Supreme Court began hearing a case Monday against an amnesty that had protected President Asif Ali Zardari and many key allies from graft charges. The process could lead to challenges against the legality of the U.S.-allied president's rule just as the Obama administration needs stability in Islamabad to help crack down on militants near the Afghan border. Court official Azhar Hussain said the 17-member bench led by Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry started hearing petitions but gave no other details. The session came two weeks after the expiration of the amnesty, which had been granted in a U.S.-backed deal with ex-military leader Pervez Musharraf to allow Zardari's late wife, former Prime Minister Bhutto, to return from exile in 2007 and run for office safe in the knowledge she would not be dogged by corruption allegations.

Australia steps up wildfire preparedness

ADELAIDE, Australia (AP)—Australians thought they were prepared for wildfires. Until Black Saturday. The infernos that blazed across Victoria state last February were the most destructive in the history of a country that faces more than 50,000 fires in an average year. In the end, 173 people were killed and more than 2,000 homes, destroyed. As a new fire season begins in Australia's south, residents and state governments alike say they are better prepared. The season typically lasts three to four months around the Australian summer. "People are definitely more cautious and more prepared now," said Peter Denson, who lost his home in the devastated town of King Lake. His lot is still black with charred trees, though he recently put up a shed on it and plans to rebuild his home.

21 killed, 50 hurt in bus collision in Bangladesh

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—Two passenger buses collided head-on in southwestern Bangladesh on Sunday, leaving 21 people dead and 50 injured. The accident occurred in Faridpur district, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southwest of the capital, Dhaka, local government administrator Helal Uddin said. Uddin had earlier said at least 15 people died at the scene and 30 others were injured, but the United News of Bangladesh agency later put the casualty figure at 21. The agency said at least 50 people were hurt. Officials could not be reached immediately to confirm the new figure. The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority says vehicle accidents, mainly blamed on poor roads and erratic driving, kill about 4,000 people each year.

World

UN says climate finale may have happy ending

COPENHAGEN (AP)—Delegates converged Sunday for the grand finale of two years of tough, sometimes bitter negotiations on a climate change treaty, as U.N. officials calculated that pledges offered in the last few weeks to reduce greenhouse gases put the world within reach of keeping global warming under control.

Yvo de Boer, the U.N.'s top climate official, said on the eve of the 192-nation conference that despite unprecedented unity and concessions, industrial countries and emerging nations need to dig deeper.

"Time is up," de Boer said. "Over the next two weeks governments have to deliver."

Finance—billions of dollars immediately and hundreds of billions of dollars annually within a decade—was emerging as the key to unblocking an agreement that would bind the global community to a sweeping plan to combat climate change.

Nations also must need to commit to larger emission reductions, de Boer said.

South Africa on Sunday became the latest country to announce an emissions target. It said over the next 10 years it would reduce emissions by 34 percent from "business as usual," the level they would reach under ordinary circumstances. By 2025 that figure would peak at 42 percent, effectively leveling off and thereafter begin to decline.

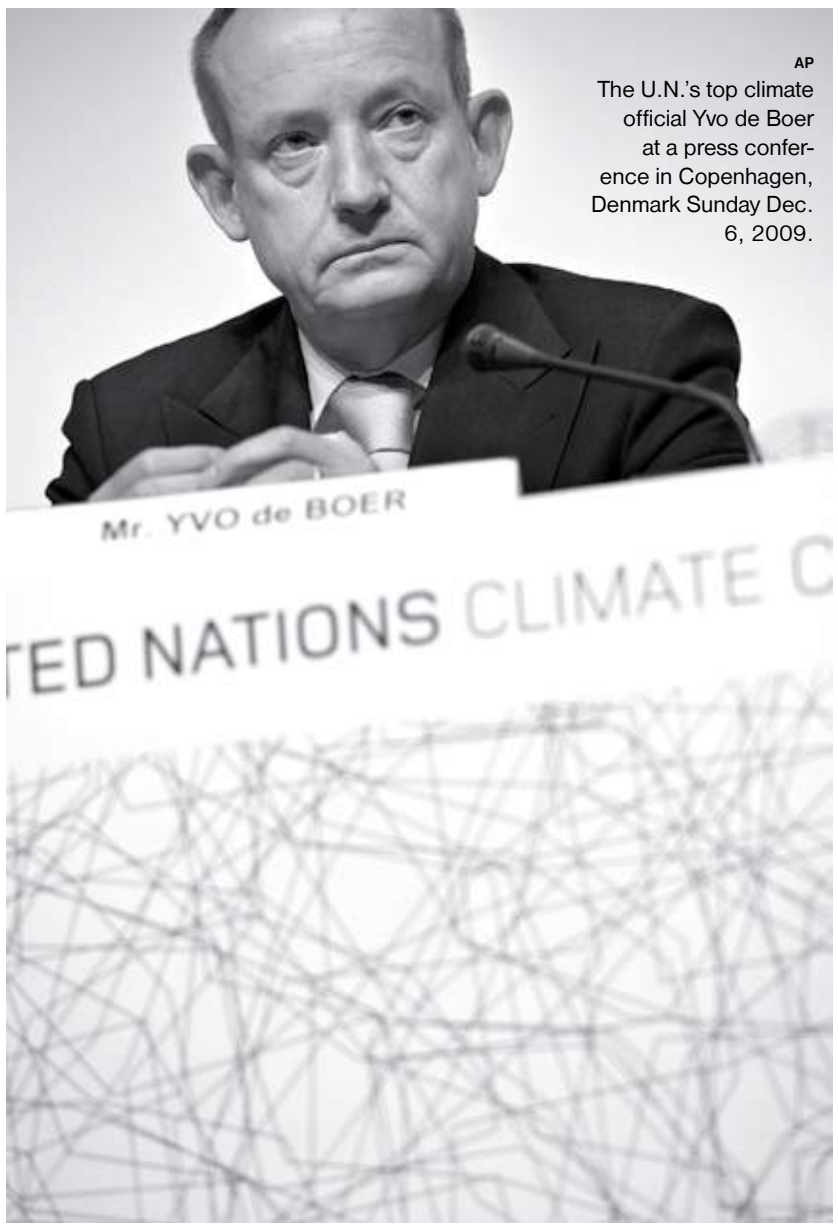
"This makes South Africa one of the stars of the negotiations," said the environmental group Greenpeace.

President Barack Obama's decision to attend the conclusion of the two-week conference, after phone consultations with other heads of state, was taken as a signal that an agreement was getting closer. He originally planned to make an hourslong stop in the Danish capital this week.

More than 100 heads of state and government have said they will attend the last day or two, making Copenhagen the largest and most important summit ever held on climate.

"Never in the 17 years of climate negotiations have so many different nations made so many firm pledges together," de Boer said. "It's simply unprecedented."

Some were arriving to the summit on trains splashed with a green stripe to symbolize efforts to reduce the convention's carbon footprint. One train carried 450 U.N. officials, delegates, climate activists and journalists from Brussels and more trains were leaving from other European capitals.



AP
The U.N.'s top climate official Yvo de Boer at a press conference in Copenhagen, Denmark Sunday Dec. 6, 2009.

Iraq clears way for parliamentary elections

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraqi lawmakers approved plans Sunday to hold parliament elections early next year that are seen as an important step toward political reconciliation and easing the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The vote—during an emergency session convened just before a midnight deadline—followed marathon talks by political leaders to break an impasse over balloting provisions that would satisfy the nation's rival groups.

"I would like to congratulate the Iraqi people for this historical victory," said Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, who had held up the elections for weeks with a veto. He also hailed political leaders for compromises that "got Iraq out from the bottleneck and out of a problem."

A failure to pass new elections rules on Sunday would have forced Iraqi to revert to those used in its last parliament election in 2005 and likely throw the political process into a tailspin.

Plans for the election had been mired for weeks over al-Hashemi's demands for a greater political voice for minority Sunnis and the distribution of seats in Iraq's expanded 325-seat parliament.

The election is scheduled for Jan. 16, but a delay of a month or more now appears likely. A longer postponement could have complicated the withdrawal timetable for U.S. forces, which are scheduled to end combat missions in August.

The full details of the pact were not immediately clear. But it appeared to resolve objections from al-Hashemi, who vetoed the election law to demand equal voting rights for Iraqis living abroad—mostly fellow Sunnis whose votes could increase Sunni clout in the next parliament.

Kurds also had objected to the distribution of seats among the country's 18 provinces, claiming they were being under-represented at the expense of Sunnis and majority Shiites, who suffered widespread repression under Saddam Hussein but took command of Iraqi's political leadership and security forces after his fall.

Iran chokes off Internet on eve of student rallies

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Government opponents shouted "Allahu Akbar" and "Death to the Dictator" from Tehran's rooftops in the pouring rain on the eve of student demonstrations planned for Monday. Authorities choked off Internet access and warned journalists working for foreign media to stick to their offices for the next three days.

The measures were aimed at depriving the opposition of its key means of mobilizing the masses as Iran's clerical rulers keep a tight lid on dissent. Government opponents are seeking, nonetheless, to get large numbers of demonstrators to turn out Monday and show their movement still has momentum.

Opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi threw his support behind the student demonstrations and declared that his movement was is still alive. A statement posted on his Web site said the clerical establishment cannot silence students and was losing legitimacy in the Iranian people's minds.

"A great nation would not stay silent when some confiscate its vote," said Mousavi, who claims President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stole the June 12 election victory from him by fraud.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters, accused the opposition Sunday of exposing divisions in the country and creating opportunities for Iran's enemies.

Iran's universities have been strongholds of the opposition movement that grew out of the disputed election, and authorities have besieged campuses nationwide with a wave of arrests and student expulsions. The pro-government Basij militia has also recruited informers on campuses to blow the whistle on any opposition troublemakers, according to students.

Despite heavy rain Sunday night, rooftop cries of "Allahu Akbar" or "God is Great" and "Death to the Dictator" were heard from many parts of the capital Tehran on Sunday night. The protest reprised one of the main tactics of the anti-shah movement in the 1979 Islamic Revolution and was revived in the days and weeks after the disputed elections.

4 detained in Russian club fire; deaths at 112

PERM, Russia (AP)—Grieving relatives on Sunday began to bury the victims of a nightclub fire that left at least 112 people dead, as four people were ordered held pending an investigation into the country's worst blaze in decades.

About 130 people remained hospitalized with injuries from the early Saturday blaze, which witnesses said was sparked by onstage fireworks that shot into the decorative twig ceiling of the Lame Horse club in the industrial city of Perm.

The federal Investigative Committee said the suspects—the club's owner, the executive director, the artistic director and a businessman hired to install pyrotechnics on the night of the blaze—were ordered taken into custody Sunday by Leninsky District Court.

The committee's Web site said they were suspected of negligence causing multiple deaths and violating fire safety rules causing multiple deaths.

Mourning residents of the Ural Mountain city of over 1 million were indignant over the alleged negligence in a country where enforcement of fire safety standards is infamously poor and there have been several catastrophic blazes at drug-treatment facilities, nursing homes, apartment buildings and nightclubs in recent years.

Nadezhda Zhizhina placed flowers on the icy ground outside the Perm City Morgue in memory of her 21-year-old son, Sergei, who she said left behing a wife who was eight months pregnant.

She wasn't expecting the compensation officials have promised to other victims' relatives because Sergei earned money at the club as an unofficial administrator.

"I can't even imagine what to do," Zhizhina said, weeping. "He was a golden boy."

The disaster outraged even those who didn't lose relatives.

"This is nothing but criminal negligence," said Marina Dryonina. "A terrible tragedy for our town."

Many victims were trapped in a panicked crush for the exit as they attempted to escape the flames and thick black smoke.

Russian news agencies named the owner as Anatoly Zak. The pyrotechnics expert was named as Sergei Dergunov by his lawyer, Yekaterina Golysheva.

WORLD BRIEFS

Violence erupts on Greek riot anniversary

ATHENS, Greece (AP)—Masked youths hurled firebombs and chunks of marble at police during a march in Athens on Sunday to mark the first anniversary of the police shooting of a teenager whose death sparked massive riots. Police fired volleys of tear gas to disperse the youths in running street battles in the center of the capital as several thousand demonstrators commemorated the death of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. The teenager's death sent youths rampaging through cities for two weeks last December. On Sunday, the rioters smashed bank windows, overturned trash bins and set them alight as they hurled rocks and fire crackers at riot police. Authorities said 177 people were detained for public order offenses in Athens and another 103 in the northern city of Thessaloniki, where a similar demonstration turned violent. Police also clashed with protesters in the southern city of Patras and the northwestern city of Ioannina.

Bolivia's Morales wins easy re-election

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP)—President Evo Morales easily won re-election on Sunday, according to unofficial results, getting an overwhelming mandate for further revolutionary change on behalf of Bolivia's long-suppressed indigenous majority. Opponents say they fear the leftist coca-growers' union leader will use a consolidation of power not just to continue battling racially based inequalities but also to trample human rights and deepen state influence over the economy. An unofficial count of 88 percent of the vote by the Equipos-Mori polling firm said Bolivia's first indigenous president won five more years in office with 62 percent of the ballots—36 points ahead of his closest challenger in a field of nine.

Results: Basescu wins Romanian presidential race

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP)—Incumbent President Traian Basescu won the Romanian presidential runoff, near final results showed Monday, in an election Romanians hope will pull the country out of its worst political and economic crisis in 20 years. With 95.7 percent of the vote counted, election authorities said centrist Basescu polled 50.43 percent of the vote, while former foreign minister Mircea Geoana received 49.57 percent. Both Basescu and Geoana claimed victory late Sunday after polls closed. Three exit polls gave Geoana, a Socialist, a slight lead.

Overdrive

2010 LAND ROVER AUTOBIOGRAPHY

A plowman dressed as a prince

By WARREN BROWN
THE WASHINGTON POST

The 2010 Land Rover Range Rover Autobiography is arguably the most extravagant, most luxurious sport-utility vehicle ever made.

WASHINGTON—It is autobiography as fantasy. As such, it makes little sense.

It is shocking in excess, astonishing in boldness. And therein resides its attractiveness. People can't turn away from it.

Those who love it are addicted. Those who hate it lust in revulsion. Neither camp is reticent in expression about this week's subject mobile.

Please welcome the 2010 Land Rover Range Rover Autobiography, arguably the most extravagant, most luxurious, most leather-bound, fine-wood-paneled, amenity-laden sport-utility vehicle ever made, which is why it's also one of the dumbest.

It is, after all, a sport-utility vehicle, essentially a truck, one designed to waddle through mud, ford streams, climb rocks, haul and pull stuff, collect dents and scratches.

But it's doubtful that the Autobiography, the most elegant Land Rover built in the brand's 61-year history, will suffer such abuse.

Who would take a $90,000 vehicle, one replete with soft leather on its seats, door pillars and ceiling—the "headliner" in auto industry parlance—into the cruelties of off-road life? Who would risk disfiguring harm to the specially formulated "Alaska white" paint of the test model I drove for a week?

I wouldn't. I didn't. I'd dare not.

The Autobiography is an aluminum, rubber and exotic-materials celebration of all things grand in luxury motoring. It is therefore a mixed message, a motorized oxymoron.

NUTS & BOLTS

THE BOTTOM LINE
The 2010 Land Rover Range Rover Autobiography is the extreme SUV for extremely affluent people who, to put it mildly, are different from you and me and don't give a hoot about what we think. I write this column in acknowledgment of their existence and in the interest of diversity.

RIDE, ACCELERATION AND HANDLING
It gets excellent grades in all three. Handling, in fact, is remarkable. The Autobiography has a factory weight–minus cargo and passengers–of 5,891 pounds. But it handles with the finesse of a much lighter, tighter vehicle.

COMPLAINT
The Autobiography's finery defeats the purpose of its engineering. No reasonable person is going to take this thing off road any more than he or she would hang a silk curtain in a rainstorm.

BODY STYLE/LAYOUT
The Autobiography is a front-engine, full-time four-wheel-drive, full-size, aluminum-bodied sport-utility vehicle with four side doors and a rear lift-gate.

ENGINES/TRANSMISSION
Two engines are available. Both were developed by Jaguar, which has joined Land Rover as a part of India's Tata Group. Engines include a normally aspirated 5-liter model with a maximum 375 horsepower and 375 foot-pounds of torque and a supercharged version with 510 horsepower and 461 foot-pounds of torque. A six-speed transmission that can be shifted automatically or manually is used with both engines.

CAPACITIES
There are seats for five people. Maximum cargo capacity is 74 cubic feet. Maximum payload, the weight of what can be carried on board, is 1,164 pounds. The autobiography can be equipped to tow up to 7,716 pounds. The fuel tank holds 27.6 gallons of required premium gasoline.

MILEAGE
You get 12 miles per gallon in the city and 18 miles per gallon on the highway. That's an average of 14 mpg–using premium fuel.

SAFETY
Standard equipment includes front and rear ventilated disc brakes, emergency braking assistance, electronic brake force distribution, electronic stability and traction control, and side and head air bags.

PRICE
Prices on the Autobiography, in round numbers, range from $89,000 to $104,000, depending on engine and other items chosen. Range Rovers tend to be option palettes, what folks in the industry refer to as customized or "bespoke" vehicles. Prices are sourced from Tata and Land Rover Range Rover U.S. dealers.

Land Rover was born of necessity in much the manner that America's Jeep came into being and for much the same reason. The American military needed a light, rugged, agile four-wheel-drive vehicle to move men and messages in theaters of war. British military people needed and wanted something similar.

To oversimplify, the Americans got the Jeep. The Brits got Land Rover. Both were born as utility vehicles first and foremost with notions of "sport" and "luxury" distant thoughts, if thoughts at all.

But peace and prosperity changed all that. Guns and swords might have been beaten into plowshares, but there was more prestige and profit in turning Jeeps and Land Rovers into luxury chariots.

It was a transformation topped at Jeep by the likes of the nearly $43,000 Jeep Commander Limited. And at Land Rover Range Rover, in what company spokespeople call "the most beautifully appointed Range Rover yet," the Autobiography crowns the line.

It is beautiful, the kind of beauty that engenders lust and loathing.

Young men and women of the hipper sort, or whom I presume to possess a sort of hipness, gave me thumbs-up, pleaded with me for a ride, a look inside, or a simple chance, as one young lady put it, "to touch the leather." Some female admirers hailed it as "sexy."

Alas, the Autobiography's men chorus also had thunderous rivals, angry people who accused me of supporting, by product choice, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and of single-handedly handing over the environment to global warming.

Both supporters and detractors were drunk with exaggeration.

The truth is that Land Rover Range Rover's Autobiography edition is a special "trim package," as they say in the automobile business, a collection of extra spiffs—real wood, including a portion of the steering wheel; fine leather everywhere; rear audio-visual entertainment system and other goodies—totaling an estimated $10,000.

But beneath the puffery is lots of muscle, in the case of this column, a supercharged 5-liter, 510-horsepower engine with a maximum 461 foot-pounds of torque—more than enough, in tandem with full-time four-wheel drive, a center locking differential and automatically locking wheel hubs—to waddle through mud, ford streams, climb rocks ... or drive to the next dinner party or board meeting.

AUTOMOTIVE NEWS

Nissan recalls over 345,000 vehicles

TOKYO (AP) — Nissan Motor Co. says it is recalling over 345,000 vehicles in Japan and abroad due to faulty brakes and fuel gauges. Nissan spokesman Mitsuru Yonekawa said Friday the recall affected a total of 345,306 vehicles. Nearly 92 percent of the recalled vehicles were sold in Japan, with the rest mainly in Asia. The transport ministry said there are no reports of accidents due to faulty brakes and fuel gauges. The ministry said corrosion could cause malfunction for parking brakes. The recalled vehicles were the Elgrand minivan, the Serena minivan and the Cefiro sedan. The Cefiro is marketed overseas as the Maxima.

Xinhua: China auto sales pass 12M in Jan-Nov

SHANGHAI (AP) — China's auto sales shot past the 12 million mark in the January-November period, with sales for all of 2009 expected to exceed 13 million, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Monday, citing industry figures. The government-sanctioned China Association of Automobile Manufacturers was due to publicly release figures for the month of November later Monday. The brief Xinhua report gave no further details. However, the figures show China maintaining its lead as the world's biggest auto market amid feeble sales in the U.S., Japan and Europe. Automakers sold 1.2 million cars and trucks in China in October and 1.3 million units in September.

Hyundai unveils redesigned Tucson at LA Auto Show

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Hyundai Motor Co. unveiled its sleek, redesigned Tucson at the Los Angeles Auto Show as it seeks a bigger share of the crossover market.

"The time is right in the crossover segment," said John Krafcik, CEO of Hyundai Motor America. "Small crossovers are attracting sophisticated drivers who put a premium on design and flexibility."

Designed and engineered in Europe, the 2010 Tucson has a more curvy shape than its boxy predecessors. The new car is 61 pounds (28 kilograms)lighter yet 3 inches (8 centimeters) longer, providing a roomier cabin and 24 percent better fuel economy than the previous model.

The latest Tucson gets 31 miles per gallon (13 kilometers per liter) on the highway while the 2009 version gets 25 mpg (11 kpl), according to Environmental Protection Agency estimates.

AP

The 2010 Hyundai Tucson, the first Hyundai crossover to be designed and engineered in Europe, is unveiled at the Los Angeles Auto Show in Los Angeles, Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009.

It also boasts Downhill Brake Control, Hillstart Assist Control to minimize rolling backward on steep ascents, a panoramic sunroof and an "Eco Indicator" to help drivers improve fuel efficiency. High-end options include a navigation system, rearview camera, Bluetooth hands-free phone connectivity, steering wheel controls and XM satellite radio.

The new car will come equipped with six-speed automatic or manual transmissions, and only four-cylinder engines will be offered.

Hyundai said it be available in showrooms later this month at a cost of "under $20,000."

The company posted a 46 percent sales growth last month and has gained market share all year even though total U.S. auto sales have dropped 24 percent.

Fuel-efficient cars such as crossovers, which are as roomy as SUVs but are built on lower car frames, are showing continued strength.

Life & Style

Shakira: Out to conquer the world

By REED JOHNSON
(C) 2009, LOS ANGELES TIMES

Shakira says she'll start a family when the time is right. That's not now.
LOS ANGELES TIMES

LOS ANGELES—In the belly of the Nokia Theatre recently, the hours were ticking down toward the American Music Awards telecast amid the usual frenzy of sound checks and lighting cues.

Everyone was waiting for the petite woman with the pre-Raphaelite blond curls. And from the moment Shakira stepped onstage in stiletto boots, skintight pants and jacket and a long gray muffler, it was clear who was running the show.

For the next hour or so, the Colombian pop star sorted out the paces of her performance, issuing instructions to her music crew, demonstrating moves to dancers and conferring with her manager and choreographer.

Then she whipped through a rehearsal of "Give It Up to Me," the dance tune that she shares with rapper Lil Wayne on her just-released album "She Wolf." For the workaholic and self-admitted control freak, it was all in a morning's labors.

A few minutes later, seated in her dressing room, she spoke of the need in the music business for always "being on top of your game and making sure that the perception is coherent with what you want to express" creatively.

For Shakira, 32, who has been in the spotlight since puberty, that means "being in survival mode all the time" and sweating the details.

"I read once that Alexander the Great would've not been great, that great, if he would've not traveled with the historians who documented his multiple battles and his victories," she mused. "So documenting your work is important, making sure that the work, if it's well done, if you put many hours and effort and energy into that, that it does its job, that it's presented the right way.

"And that's when you make sure that you're surrounded by intelligent people who can also contribute to your career in great ways ... ,"she continued. "You can't win a battle if you don't have the right army behind you."

Like many of Shakira's pronouncements, the comparison to the Macedonian conqueror was offered in a manner both playful and pensive. This, after all, is a performer who, according to family legend, launched her career as a child by jumping up on a table at a Middle Eastern restaurant and belly-dancing (a vestige of her Lebanese-European ancestry), yet possesses sufficient gravitas to have crooned at President Barack Obama's inaugural concert at the Lincoln Memorial.

Shakira's ambition has been obvious. After a fledgling recording effort, she seized control of producing her discs and swept onto the world's pop-culture radar with her 1996 studio release "Pies Descalzos" ("Bare Feet"), which has sold more than 6 million copies.

To extend the singer's military metaphor, that was merely the opening salvo setting up the blitzkrieg of "Laundry Service," Shakira's debut assault on the English-speaking pop market, and her 2005 two-record project, "Oral Fixation" (in Spanish, "Fijacion Oral") Volumes 1 and 2.

During that span, she established herself as one of the most successful Latina and female artists going, with some 50 million albums sold. She also engineered a reputation as a kinetic live attraction and one of the savviest appraisers of gotta-dance grooves this side of Madonna. She displays her connoisseurship in synthetic beats and carefully sampled collaborators on "She Wolf," from Sony Music, which includes duets with Wyclef Jean and Kid Cudi.

"I wanted to explore electronica and to dive into the world of synthesizers, but at the same time keep the fusion of elements that come from different cultures and different countries," she said. "So you're going to find in this album a lot of influences, from India, the Middle East, Jamaica, Colombia, all within this electronic context."

Critically, the English-language disc on Sony has earned positive if mildly puzzled stateside reviews. Judging by Web site comments, some fans initially found Shakira's forays in electronica on "She Wolf" a bit jolting, but warmed to the sound.

Shakira agrees that melodic-driven Latin American pop, steeped in romantic yearning, was slow to assimilate electronica's cooler, harder-edged palette. But through the advocacy of such influential pan-Latin artists as mega producer-artist Gustavo Santaloalla, musicians in the Western Hemisphere's southern half lately have been diving into synth-beat pop.

"Electronica has many interesting possibilities to offer today to musicians," Shakira said. "I wanted an album that was dance-y and uplifting, and I wanted to have fun with the music, and I wanted people to be able to have fun with it and forget about their troubles. And I feel that if in the middle of the economy and the world crisis, if music can have a little bit of a therapeutic power, if that premise is true, then I would love my music to contribute in some kind of way."

Practically from the moment she entered show business, Shakira has used her fame, time and checkbook to underwrite charitable projects, setting up a foundation when she was 18. Her work mainly has been directed at helping children rise from impoverished backgrounds through education (her charity has built five schools in Colombia and is working on a sixth), and she regularly jets around the world to meet with billionaire philanthropists such as Mexico's Carlos Slim, World Bank officials and others.

The impulse behind her political activism was personal. When she was 8 years old, her jeweler father went bankrupt. Her family was obliged to sell the furniture in their Barranquilla home, along with the air conditioner and both cars.

"I couldn't believe my parents! I thought they were the most incompetent business people in the world! And I was so upset. And my dad and my mom took me to the park that day, where all the kids who were orphans are sniffing glue to deal with the tragedy of their own lives and hunger and the solitude of their lives. Little kids, like my age, sniffing glue and barefoot. They just wanted to show me another reality that was much worse than mine ... Those images of those kids left a huge impression."

Shakira's relentless work ethic is the other legacy of that traumatic episode, and she acknowledges that she still has trouble locating her personal on/off switch. She was taken aback while making "She Wolf" whenever her detail-sweating collaborator, producer-artist Pharrell Williams, had to remind her that it was 11 at night and time to call it a day.

"He would look at the watch every night at 11 o'clock, he would say, `Uh, Shak, I have a baby at home, I gotta go.' And I'm like, `What, are you kidding me? We just started like a few hours ago!'"

There've been published reports that Latin pop's reigning bilingual princess is pondering putting aside her career for a while to move into that parental state herself, with her longtime boyfriend, Antonio de la Rua, whose father is the former president of Argentina. Asked if that's true, Shakira utters a swift, emphatic reply.

"Well, now I can't think of breaks. You know, all my energy is so adrenalized, I can't think of anything else but putting together my next world tour, and the ideas are flowing and the wheels are in motion. I'm like a train who can't stop right now. But I think that when it does stop, the next station will be baby station!"

She laughed at herself, something that, for all his accomplishments, it's hard to imagine Alexander the Great ever doing.

"But I wouldn't stop for long," she said. "I need to continue being creative. It's my nature."

Q&A: New Leona Lewis CD echoes growth, strength

NEW YORK (AP)—The success of Leona Lewis' "Bleeding Love" not only made the British-born singer an international star last year—it also helped her branch out and toughen up.

"I'm quite a sensitive person and I'm quite introvert, but I've learned that I'm stronger than I thought and I can take more than I thought I can. Sometimes I have to push myself, but like I am definitely stronger than I thought I was," the 24-year-old says.

Lewis says that newfound strength is all over her sophomore CD, "Echo," out on Tuesday.

"I think the songs are very epic," she says of the disc, which features collaborations with Justin Timberlake, Ne-Yo, Max Martin and Ryan Tedder, who produced the first single, "Happy."

In a recent interview, the singer talked about gaining confidence, her fans and the inspirations behind "Echo."

The Associated Press: When were some of the moments when you've had to be stronger?

Lewis: I think in certain situations where you've had like negative comments or anything like that, usually that can like really effect you. And me especially because I'm really sensitive. I've just learned that for like that one percent that is bad, there's like 99 percent that's good and that's what you have to hang on to.

AP: You say you're more confident on this CD compared to your debut, "Spirit." Why?

Lewis: I've had much more time with this album. I feel very passionate about all of the songs. I've put everything into this album.

AP: Why did you decide to go back in the studio with Ryan Tedder?

Lewis: I just wanted to go back in with Ryan because he did "Bleeding Love" and we really get along and he's super, super talented. ... I'd say we've really gotten to know each other much more. He just brings something out of me that kind of needs to be brought out sometimes, from writing to music and vocals. He's a vocalist himself, it's great to work with people who are vocalists, producers who can sing as well because they really understand about what to do, where to go melody-wise and stuff.

AP: He's gone off to produce for Beyonce and Kelly Clarkson, among others. What do you think he's learned from you?

Lewis: He'd been producing a lot before ... and of course "Bleeding Love" was his first major, major song. He's just kind of learned from me about working with artists, and things like that. I don't know, we just bring something out of each other that just comes alive in the studio.

AP: The first single "Happy"—is it a reflection of a bad relationship?

Lewis: "Happy" didn't start off as something that was about a relationship. It just started off in general life—someone being like told to do this, and told to do that, and not really wanting to do that. But then it kind of just transcended into being able to be relatable to someone who's just been broken up with or who's broken up with someone to better themselves. It kind of turned into something that relates to everything.

AP: What's been the biggest challenge since you've faced?

Lewis: Adjusting to the fact that people know you now a bit more. I've still kind of maintained a low profile but people still kind of recognize you and will come up to you and that's taken a bit of getting used to.

AP: Get a lot of fans thinking you're like a family member?

Lewis: Yeah. In the U.K. they feel like they really know me. Like I'm their sister or something, which is really sweet. I've got a lot of love there and a lot of support, because people have seen me come up like that. It's definitely special I think.

Kennedy Center honors Springsteen, De Niro, others

WASHINGTON (AP)—With a little help from Carol Burnett, a new star from the hit TV show "Glee" and other top entertainers, political Washington is saluting five of the nation's top artists with the Kennedy Center Honors this weekend.

A surprise list of star performers will honor Bruce Springsteen, Robert De Niro and comic genius Mel Brooks Sunday during a show attended by President Barack Obama and other power players from Washington and Hollywood.

Also receiving the honors—which recognize individuals who have defined American culture through the arts as a living memorial to John F. Kennedy—are jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck and opera singer Grace Bumbry.

About 300 guests, including Jack Black, Edward Norton, Matthew Broderick, Ben Stiller, Martin Scorsese, Sting, Philip Seymour Hoffman were at a reception in the East Room of the White House.

"These performers are indeed the best," Obama said at the gathering. "They are also living reminders of a single truth—and I'm going to steal a line from Michelle here—the arts are not somehow apart from our national life, the arts are the heart of our national life."

Springsteen, 60, described the award he received on Saturday night at a State Department dinner as different than other accolades.

"We worked really hard for our music to be part of American life and our fans' lives," he said. "So it's an acknowledgment that you've kind of threaded your way into the culture in a certain way. It's satisfying."

Obama said, "Only a handful of people have tapped the full power of music to tell the American story. ... One of those people is Bruce Springsteen. ... I'm the president, but he's the boss."

The show will air nationwide Dec. 29 on CBS.

Melissa Ethridge said she will perform for Springsteen, singing "Born to Run." She said she first met Springsteen at a Beverly Hills restaurant and he recognized her.

"I fainted, well I didn't faint, but I would have fainted," she said.

She said Springsteen is "the most delightful human being" and the epitome of a great performer.

"He's got it all."

State Department officials would not say whether security for the events has been heightened after a Virginia couple recently sneaked into a White House State dinner. The gala is Obama's first big event since Micheale and Tareq Salahi slipped past White House security Nov. 24. The Secret Service runs security for Kennedy Center events the president attends, and everyone who enters must have a ticket that will be checked at the door.

AP

The 2009 Kennedy Center Honorees, from left, Grace Bumbry, Robert De Niro, Bruce Springsteen, Mel Brooks, and Dave Brubeck share a laugh at the State Department following the Kennedy Center Honors Gala Dinner on Saturday, Dec. 5, 2009 in Washington.

On the red carpet, Katie Couric said she talked to the Salahis quite a bit at the dinner and joked that everyone is going to be on the lookout for party crashers.

"I think security is a little tighter here," she said.

Burnett led a series of toasts at a more private celebration for the honorees Saturday after a dinner for about 200 hosted by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Several of the honorees, Clinton said, have been at the forefront of cultural diplomacy. Brubeck, who turned 89 on Sunday, was sent abroad in the Cold War, she said, to serve as an ambassador with his music in countries teetering between democracy and communism.

And Springsteen played a rock concert in East Berlin for 160,000 people just 16 months before the Berlin Wall fell—a concert many Germans remember 20 years later, Clinton said.

"In every time and every culture, artists have lit the way toward progress," she said. "They've helped to provide a common language, a fabric that weaves us together as human beings."

Then there's the more irreverent arts. Even the mention of Brooks' number "Springtime for Hitler" from "The Producers" was enough to draw chuckles.

Brooks, 83, said it's special to receive the honor during the Obama administration. He said he'll whisper something in the president's ear about the need for more federal funding for the arts.

"I think when all my awards go to e-Bay, it will be the last," Brooks said of the Kennedy Center medallion. "That's how much I treasure it."

Many workers and guests were even more gaga Saturday over seeing Matthew Morrison from TV's "Glee." They recognized him as Mr. Schuster, the high school teacher and glee club coach from the Fox show.

Morrison said he was elated to visit Washington to help honor Brooks.

"I like crossing the line every now and then, and he's kind of the master of crossing that line, being a little offensive at times," Morrison said. "The man is a living legend."

Journalist Barbara Walters sat with Clinton and turned heads when she arrived as actor Frank Langella's date.

Jon Stewart was seated at Springsteen's table, along with Caroline Kennedy.

Former President Bill Clinton, a saxophone player, offered a moving toast for Brubeck. He said he first saw Brubeck's quartet in concert when he was about 15 years old and was "utterly captivated."

'Monk' star Shalhoub calls finale very satisfying

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The final episode of "Monk" has some heavy lifting to do: Resolve Monk's poisoning and whether he survives, uncover his wife's killer or, just maybe, reveal whether Trudy really is alive after all.

Tony Shalhoub, who inhabited the title character so perfectly for eight seasons that he collected three Emmy Awards, refuses to drop any spoilers and offers only a broad outline of Adrian Monk's fate Friday.

"The ending, just from my point of view, is very satisfying," Shalhoub said. "Granted, the last two episodes are much darker than episodes we've done in the past, more drama than the usual 'dramedy' tone, but I really thought the writers hit it out of the park."

Will viewers be just as contented with the conclusion of a two-part finale that began last week? Shalhoub, weighing his words even more carefully, veers toward psychological analysis.

"I think what they will feel is kind of a magnification of what I believe they've been feeling all along, which is kind of mixed about Monk: Feel good for him, bad for him, frustrated for him," he said. "Hoping for his success and for his healing, his recovery."

The last episode brings, presumably, the culmination of Monk's effort to solve his wife's decade-old Christmastime murder. Her car was blown up, with her apparently in it, after she expressed concern about the case of a missing midwife.

AP

This Sept. 18, 2005 file photo shows Tony Shalhoub holding the award for outstanding lead actor in a comedy series for his work on "Monk" at the 57th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles.

At the time, Monk was a San Francisco police detective with a mild obsessive-compulsive disorder. After Trudy's death, his increased phobias forced him into a psychiatric leave from the department but his skills made him a valuable consultant and freelance crime-solver.

In part one of "Mr. Monk and the End," Monk was poisoned while investigating the murder of a doctor who had been interviewed in the midwife's disappearance. As doctors try to identify the toxin and a cure, an increasingly ill Monk finally opens the Christmas gift that Trudy (Melora Hardin, "The Office") left for him so long ago.

It's a videotape from her with a chilling message: "If you're watching this, it means I'm dead. ... There's something I never told you. Something happened ... something terrible. It was years ago, before we met," she says — and cut to part two.

"Monk" fans, naturally, are intrigued and game for speculation. Among the theories floated online: Monk solves Trudy's murder, dies, and is reunited with her in the afterlife; Monk solves her murder, lives, and finds new love and mental health; Trudy isn't dead but in hiding and finally, with her safety ensured, is reunited with Monk for the happiest of endings.

There is also the anticipated viewer depression that accompanies the conclusion of any series, particularly one with a loyal following. Is it possible that Monk could make a comeback someday, in a TV film or otherwise?

Shalhoub, whose next job is onstage in New York, appearing with his wife, Brooke Adams, in a Stanley Tucci-directed revival of "Lend Me A Tenor" in April, hedges his bets.

Rat cooking lands TV show in hot water

SYDNEY (AP)—Two stars of the reality TV show "I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here" have been charged with animal cruelty after allegedly killing and cooking a rat to eat during filming.

Chef Gino D'Acampo who won the viewer-feedback contest series, and actor Stuart Manning were charged after animal welfare activists lodged a complaint about a segment for the British TV program, which was filmed in Australia, the activists and British media reported Sunday.

In a statement to The Associated Press, New South Wales state police said Sunday that two men, aged 33 and 30, were charged with animal cruelty for acts in connection to the program but did not give names or other details. They have been asked to appear in court to face the charge on Feb. 3. The maximum penalty is three years in prison.

D'Acampo is 33 years old and Manning 30.

The show's producer, ITV, confirmed in a statement that "the New South Wales RSPCA are currently looking into an incident in which a rat was killed in the camp."

"The killing of a rat for a performance is not acceptable. The concern is this was done purely for the cameras," David O'Shannessy of the New South Wales RSPCA told the British Broadcasting Corp.

He said producers were normally required to have animal welfare officers on set when animals were used during filming, but in this case it did not take place.

"I'm a Celebrity" strands C-list celebrities in the Australian jungle, subjects them to a series of icky trials involving spiders and snakes, and allows the public to vote them off the show one by one.

Twisted Sister guitarist recovers from surgery

ATLANTIC CITY, New Jersey (AP)—Twisted Sister guitarist Eddie Ojeda is recuperating from emergency back surgery that forced him to miss the band's concert near Philadelphia.

Ojeda experienced intense pain that prevented him from standing or sitting, went to a hospital and had surgery to repair a ruptured disc, according to bandmate Jay Jay French. Dan McCafferty, who played guitar in singer Dee Snider's solo band, was pressed into duty as a last-minute replacement at the Keswick Theater on Wednesday night.

French says Ojeda is feeling better and hopes to perform at the band's Sunday night concert at New York's Nokia Theater. If he can't, McCafferty will fill in there as well.

"I talked to him this morning, and he says he feels much better," French said Friday. "They want to see if he can stand for two hours and play. He plans to try it."

Ojeda's absence forced some scrambling in the band. As a member of "Dee Snider's SMFs," McCafferty had played French's solos in the Twisted Sister songs that often featured solos from both guitarists.

"He played my parts and I had to learn Eddie's parts, which I had never done in all these years 'cause there was never a reason for me to," French said.

"Under The Blade," Twisted Sister's first hit, was written about Ojeda's throat surgery in the 1970s.

The band is in the midst of their annual "Twisted Christmas" tour that also includes shows in Las Vegas Dec. 15-17. They also will perform at the lighting of the New York Stock Exchange Christmas tree on Dec. 10.

Dating couple wins CBS 'Amazing Race' contest

NEW YORK (AP)—Cool thinking at the craps table has won a San Diego couple $1 million on the CBS reality television show "The Amazing Race."

Meghan Rickey and her boyfriend, Cheyne Whitney, prevailed in the 15th edition of the Emmy Award-winning game show, which has contestants racing around the world while collecting clues and completing tasks. In the finale, televised Sunday, they beat two other couples to the finish line by being quickest to count out $1 million worth of chips at a Las Vegas casino.

Dan and Sam McMillen, bickering brothers who recently revealed to each other that they're gay, came in second place. The third-place finishers were Ericka Dunlap, former Miss America 2004, and her husband, Brian Kleinschmidt.

"The Amazing Race," which sends 12 two-person teams around the world in a series of pulse-pounding competitions, is a steady ratings performer for CBS on Sunday nights and has won seven Emmys for best reality show. Competitors darted through eight countries in 21 days, starting the final episode in the Czech Republic city of Prague.

All three couples in the finale were on the same airplane flight to Las Vegas, where the show's last leg was a race around casinos. They had to collect clues from an Elvis Presley impersonator, rappel down the side of the Mandalay resort and retrieve a bouquet by bungee jumping onstage where Cirque du Soleil performs.

Rickey and Whitney, 23-year-old students who have known each other since grade school and have dated for several years, dominated several legs of the competition. And things looked good for them when they were in first place after the bungee jump.

Their next clue was to go to the resort named for the most famous casino in Monaco. Yet a clueless cab driver sent them to the Venetian resort instead of the correct one, the Monte Carlo. They were in third place when they got to the right place, where they were to count out $1 million from a huge pile of chips.

But while nerves got the best of their competitors, Rickey and Whitney quickly reached their goal and were sent to find Mr. Las Vegas, who was to tell them the finish line. When they located entertainer Wayne Newton, he told them the finish line was at his house.

One embarrassing moment for Mr. Las Vegas: The McMillen brothers blanked on his name when they met him.

A frantic cab ride later, and Rickey and Whitney raced across the finish line.

"This has been such a learning experience," Rickey said. "Every step of the way it has been so neat."

It was a frustrating finish for Dunlap, driven to tears by her difficulty in the bungee jumping competition. But Dunlap, who is black, said she hoped the show melted away some of her family's resistance to her husband, who is white.

"I hope," she said, "that they fully accept him for who he is."

Weezer singer hurt in bus skid

GLEN, New York (AP)—The lead singer of the alternative rock band Weezer suffered minor injuries when the group's tour bus hit some ice, skidded across the New York State Thruway, struck a guide rail and slid into a ditch early Sunday morning, police said.

Rivers Cuomo and the band's assistant, identified as Sarah Kim, were taken to a local hospital following the accident in the upstate New York town of Glen, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) west of Albany. Kim also suffered minor injuries.

Cuomo's wife and 2-year-old daughter also were on the bus when it barreled off the road, but the two were unhurt. They were traveling east to Boston, Massachusetts, where the band was scheduled to perform on Monday.

About 7:22 a.m. the vehicle struck ice and the driver lost control, police said. The vehicle mounted the median, then swerved back across the eastbound lands, rammed a guide rail on the right shoulder and crashed into a ditch alongside the roadway, police said.

Cuomo and Kim were transported by ambulance to St. Mary's Hospital in Amsterdam, New York.

AP

In this Monday, Sept. 21, 2009 file photo, Rivers Cuomo of Weezer performs as part of the "Guitar Hero 5 Fridays on Yahoo! Music" concert series, at The Roxy in West Hollywood, Calif.

Patrick Wilson, the band's drummer, posted an entry about the accident on his Twitter feed hours after the crash.

"It was perfect conditions for black ice," Wilson said. "Got loose going towards the meridian, driver saves it but bus goes thru guardrail into 6ft ditch."

It was not immediately clear if Wilson was also on the bus, or whether the group would perform at its scheduled concert on Monday.

The band's official blogger and agent did not immediately respond to e-mails or phone messages requesting comment on Sunday afternoon.

Formed in Los Angeles in 1992, Weezer had a handful of hits two years later with the songs "Undone—The Sweater Song," ''Buddy Holly" and "Say It Ain't So." The band released its seventh studio album, "Raditude," in November.

AP

This is a Nov. 21, 2009, file photo showing Tiger Woods with his daughter, Sam, and wife, Elin, before the start of an NCAA college football game between Stanford and California, in Stanford, Calif.

'SNL' can't resist Tiger Woods jokes

NEW YORK (AP)—Tiger Woods and his marital problems proved a tempting target for "Saturday Night Live."

In both a skit and multiple "Weekend Update" jokes this weekend, NBC's comedy institution took on the golfer, who has admitted to letting his family down with "transgressions" that came to light following a strange Thanksgiving weekend incident outside his Florida home.

In one skit, actor Jason Sudeikis portrayed Wolf Blitzer on CNN's "Situation Room" reporting on a news conference that Woods (played by Kenan Thompson) and his wife (played by host Blake Lively) were holding outside his home. After Woods admitted to "multiple" transgressions, his wife looked surprised and the screen quickly shifted back to Blitzer.

"Breaking news," Blitzer said. "Tiger Woods is back in the hospital. "Apparently just hours after a press conference where he confessed to multiple transgressions, Woods had an accident in his home where he fell down a flight of stairs then inadvertently threw himself through a plate glass window."

Woods returned for a later news conference, his wife brandishing a golf club next to him, where he said, "Wow, I've been really clumsy this week."

He had more such "accidents," then returns to read a prepared statement with the words "help me" and "I'm scared" written on the back of the papers for the audience to see.

In "Weekend Update," anchor Seth Meyers peppered Woods with one-liners.

"Last Friday Tiger Woods hit a tree and a bunch of ladies fell out," he said.

Meyers noted that Woods and his wife were in negotiations over their prenuptial agreement, and "what's really weird is he presented her with one of those huge, oversized checks."

Woods' sponsors are sticking with him, Meyers said, "a gesture that only means one thing—women don't watch golf."

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Old Dogs
Friday 4:25 7:15 9:30
Saturday 1:25 4:25 7:15 9:30
Sunday 1:25 4:25 7:15
Mon thru Thurs 4:25 7:15
John Travolta, Robin Williams
Comedy, Family • Rated PG
Synopsis
Two best friends—one unlucky-in-love divorcee and the other a fun-loving bachelor—have their lives turned upside down when they're unexpectedly charged with the care of 7-year-old twins while on the verge of the biggest business deal of their lives. The not-so-kid-savvy bachelors stumble in their efforts to take care of the twins, leading to one debacle after another, and perhaps to a new-found understanding of what's really important in life.

Ninja Assassin
Friday 4:30 7:10 9:40
Saturday 1:10 4:30 7:10 9:40
Sunday 1:10 4:30 7:10
Mon thru Thurs 4:30 7:10
Rain, Rick Yune
Action • Rated R
Synopsis
Raizo is one of the deadliest assassins in the world. Taken from the streets as a child, he was transformed into a trained killer by the Ozunu Clan, a secret society whose very existence is considered a myth. But haunted by the merciless execution of his friend by the Clan, Raizo breaks free from them...and vanishes. Now he waits, preparing to exact his revenge. In Berlin, Europol agent Mika Coretti has stumbled upon a money trail linking several political murders to an underground network of untraceable assassins from the Far East.

Paranormal Activity
Friday 4:10 7:30 9:50
Saturday 1:20 4:10 7:30 9:50
Sunday 1:20 4:10 7:30
Mon thru Thurs 4:10 7:30
Katie Featherston, Micah Sloat
Thriller, Horror • Rated R
Synopsis
After a young, middle class couple moves into what seems like a typical suburban "starter" tract house, they become increasingly disturbed by a presence that may or may not be demonic, but is certainly most active in the middle of the night. Especially when they sleep. Or try to.

Twilight Saga: New Moon
Friday 4:00 7:00 9:45
Saturday 1:00 4:00 7:00 9:45
Sunday 1:00 4:00 7:00
Mon thru Thurs 4:00 7:00
Robert Pattinson, Kristen Stewart
Thriller, Romance • Rated PG 13

2012
Friday 4:05 7:05 10:10
Saturday 1:05 4:05 7:05 10:10
Sunday 1:05 4:05 7:05
Mon thru Thurs 4:05 7:05
John Cusack, Amanda Peet
Action, Thriller • Rated PG 13

Planet 51
Friday 4:20 7:20 9:35
Saturday 1:30 4:20 7:20 9:35
Sunday 1:30 4:20 7:20
Mon thru Thurs 4:20 7:20
Gary Oldman, Jessica Biel
Comedy, Adventure • Rated PG 13

The Blind Side
Friday 4:15 7:25 10:00
Saturday 1:15 4:15 7:25 10:00
Sunday 1:15 4:15 7:25
Mon thru Thurs 4:15 7:25
Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw
Drama, Biopic • Rated PG 13

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'Blind Side' eclipses 'New Moon' with $20M weekend

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The football-inspired drama "The Blind Side" has become the underdog hit of the season with a weekend box-office victory over "The Twilight Saga: New Moon."

The real-life tale "The Blind Side" took over the No. 1 spot with $20.4 million in its third weekend. The vampire romance "New Moon" finished second with $15.7 million after two weekends in first-place.

"The Blind Side" had been the No. 2 movie for the previous two weekends but has hung on with great fan buzz. The film stars Sandra Bullock as a woman whose family adopts homeless teen Michael Oher, now a rookie tackle for the Baltimore Ravens.

"New Moon" still is far ahead in total gross with $255.6 million domestically, compared to $129.3 million for "The Blind Side."

AP

This undated campaign photograph shows Jody Trautwein, a pastor who was featured in the movie "Bruno" and is running for mayor of Birmingham, Ala.

'Bruno' pastor runs for mayor in Alabama

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama (AP)—Moviegoers know Jody Trautwein as the smiling Alabama pastor who tries to talk Sacha Baron Cohen's character out of being gay in the hit movie "Bruno." Trautwein is now auditioning for another role: Mayor of Birmingham.

Trautwein is among 14 candidates in next Tuesday's election to replace Larry Langford, who was booted from office in October after being convicted on 60 felony counts in a bribery scheme.

But political discussions inevitably begin with Trautwein's part in "Bruno," a spoof released this summer in which Cohen portrayed a gay Austrian fashion journalist traveling the United States.

"I haven't seen the movie," Trautwein, 39, said in an interview. "From what I understand it's about an hour and a half of darkness and perversion with about three minutes of light."

Trautwein said he was duped into appearing in the movie through phone calls from a producer and fake Internet sites set up by Cohen's cohorts. Trautwein believed he was helping a German TV crew telling the story of a man who wanted to give up homosexuality.

In the movie, Trautwein counsels "Bruno" to convert to heterosexuality by believing in Jesus.

"He wants to come into your heart right now," Trautwein says.

"Are you hitting on me?" Cohen deadpans.

No, Trautwein wasn't. But the segment helped the administrator and youth pastor at Point of Grace Church build a campaign profile.

Trautwein caught the attention of movie producers because of his former position as director of the Alabama Coalition Against Same-Sex Marriage.

Mexican governor: Gibson to make film in Veracruz

VERACRUZ, Mexico (AP)—A Mexican governor says Mel Gibson will make a movie at a prison in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz next year.

Veracruz Gov. Fidel Herrera says part of the Ignacio Allende prison will be emptied in January "because a grand production will be filmed there with our friend, the actor and producer Mel Gibson."

Gibson visited the prison in April 2008.

Herrera gave no details Sunday on the film. Gibson's publicist, Alan Nierob, could not be reached for comment.

Gibson filmed his 2006 Mayan-language movie "Apocalypto" in Veracruz. The actor-director donated $1 million to replace storm-damaged homes in Veracruz and in neighboring Chiapas state earlier this year.

In this Dec. 10, 2008 file photo, actor and director Mel Gibson attends the 9th Annual Global Green Design Awards in New York.

AP

Bacons perform at Philly Mummers' fundraiser

In this March 25, 2009 file photo, Michael Bacon, left, and Kevin Bacon of The Bacon Brothers band pose for a portrait in Los Angeles.

AP

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Actor Kevin Bacon and his brother are helping out a century-old Philadelphia tradition.

The Bacon Brothers performed at a fundraising concert Saturday night to raise money for the annual Mummers Parade.

The parade of sequined, feathered marchers and musicians is held every New Year's Day. The first official parade happened in 1901 but the tradition dates to the 17th century.

Save the Mummers chairman George Badey says proceeds from the concert will help pay for city services related to the parade and provide prize money to cover the costs of costumes and props.

Last year, the city decided it could no longer pay out the more than $300,000 in prizes.

Austrian news agency: Famed Austrian artist dead

AP

Austrian sculptur Alfred Hrdlicka sits in front of one of his drawings during a reception on the occasion of his 80th birthday, in this Feb. 27, 2008 file photo, at a gallery in Vienna, Austria.

VIENNA (AP)—The Austria Press Agency is reporting that famed Austrian artist Alfred Hrdlicka is dead. Hrdlicka was 81.

His sculptures, drawings and paintings are known as much for their artistic subtlety as their controversial themes. His religious works, in particular, drew protest from believers who considered them blasphemous.

Among his better-known works are his cast iron sculpture of a prostrate figure covered by barbed wire in Vienna. The starkly disturbing "Memorial Against War and Fascism" has been occasionally defaced since its 1991 unveiling.

APA cites Ernst Hilger, who runs the gallery where many of Hrdlicka work's have been shown, as announcing Hrdlicka's death Saturday in the daily Die Presse. Phone calls to Hilger were not returned.

Husband builds verbal walls between wife and her friends

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

DearAbby

DEAR ABBY: I have a good friend whose husband is isolating her from family and friends. He's a counselor, and he uses his training as a psychologist to convince her that none of her friends are to be trusted. He twists anything we do or say to keep her at a distance from us.

He tells her she's a horrible mother and a terrible person in general, and she believes him. I think she has been brainwashed.

He also hits on other women regularly, myself included. When I tried to tell my friend what he did, she refused to believe me because he already told her his version of the story and made it look like it was my fault.

Is there any way to help a woman who is being held mentally captive by her husband?

DISTRAUGHT FRIEND

DEAR DISTRAUGHT: One way to begin would be to approach her as a group and tell her you are all concerned and that you care about her. Tell her often that you are there for her and always will be, and that you know she's a terrific person and a wonderful, caring parent. Point out that only two people in the world think otherwise, and that's her husband and her. And repeat that you're afraid she's being verbally and emotionally abused until she finally hears you.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I'm a 43-year-old woman who has never been married. My boyfriend, "Phil"—with whom I share a wonderful relationship—has been divorced three times and has made it clear he does not want to marry again.

We're in the process of buying a home together, and I cannot let go of the hope that one day we'll live in it as husband and wife. It has always been my dream to find that one "right" person and settle down. In my eyes, Phil is that special person. I feel cheated that because of his failed marriages my hopes and dreams don't matter.

Phil loves me and is good to me, but I have mixed emotions. I feel that having shared an exclusive relationship for two years and the fact that we are now buying a house together means we should be married. Must I accept the relationship we have?

DREAM LOVER IN MINNESOTA

DEAR DREAM LOVER: No. What you must accept is that your dream and Phil's are not the same. You yearn for commitment, which from his track record it appears Phil has trouble with.

If marriage is what you really want, you're betting on the wrong horse, and before investing in something as expensive as a home, I urge you to discuss this significant financial commitment with an attorney to ensure that your interests are fully protected.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: Our son lived with his girlfriend for several years. They had a beautiful daughter together but split up a year and a half later. His ex-girlfriend now lives with another man, and they have a new baby girl. They'll probably get married.

Our granddaughter is now 5 and we pick her up, take her places and do things with her. We also buy her the usual gifts for her birthday and holidays. We travel frequently and bring her souvenirs from our travels.

Now that she has a baby sister, are we obligated to do the same for her? Or should we continue doing for our granddaughter only? What is the proper thing here?

HELP NEEDED IN ALABAMA

DEAR HELP NEEDED: Put yourself in the position of the younger sister and imagine how she will feel when she's older and she's left behind or forgotten. If you exclude her completely, I guarantee it will cause resentment and division between the girls, so open your heart. Be inclusive and generous—not only for her sake, but also for your granddaughter's.

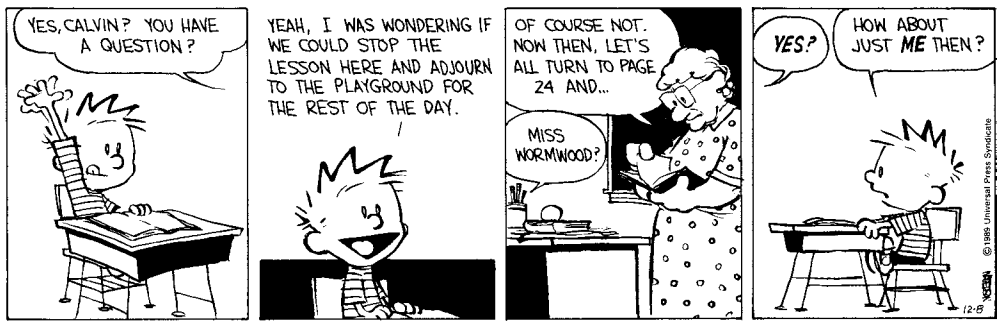
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for $6 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby—Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


YES, CALVIN? YOU HAVE A QUESTION?
YEAH, I WAS WONDERING IF WE COULD STOP THE LESSON HERE AND ADJOURN TO THE PLAYGROUND FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.
OF COURSE NOT. NOW THEN, LET'S ALL TURN TO PAGE 24 AND...
MISS WORMWOOD?
YES?
HOW ABOUT JUST ME THEN?
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12-8

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

THE TREE'S STILL CROOKED
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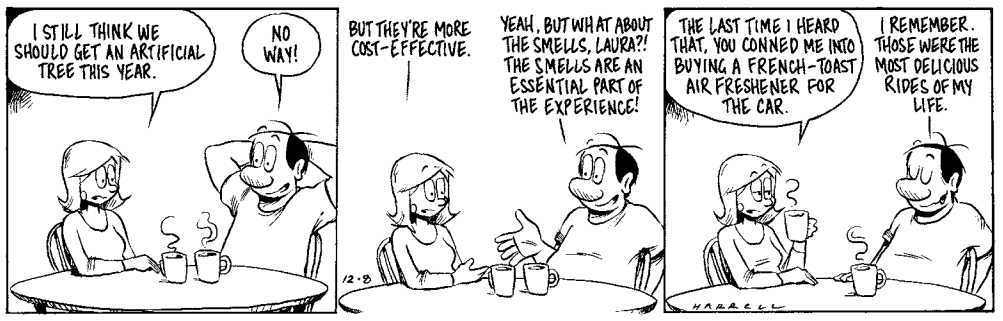
JIM DAVIS 12-8

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


I STILL THINK WE SHOULD GET AN ARTIFICIAL TREE THIS YEAR.
NO WAY!
BUT THEY'RE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE.
YEAH, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SMELLS, LAURA?! THE SMELLS ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE EXPERIENCE!
THE LAST TIME I HEARD THAT, YOU CONNED ME INTO BUYING A FRENCH-TOAST AIR FRESHENER FOR THE CAR.
I REMEMBER. THOSE WERE THE MOST DELICIOUS RIDES OF MY LIFE.
12-8
HARRELL

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

THE GROCERY STORE WAS OUT OF GRAVY, SO THEY SUBSTITUTED BREAD CRUMBS INSTEAD.
I'M SUPPOSED TO PUT BREAD CRUMBS ON MY MASHED POTATOES?
WE'LL TAKE IT IF YOU DON'T WANT IT.
ENO LIKES BREAD CRUMBS ON HIS TOAST.
IT MAKES IT TASTE "EXTRA-BREADY."
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GLENN McCOY

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

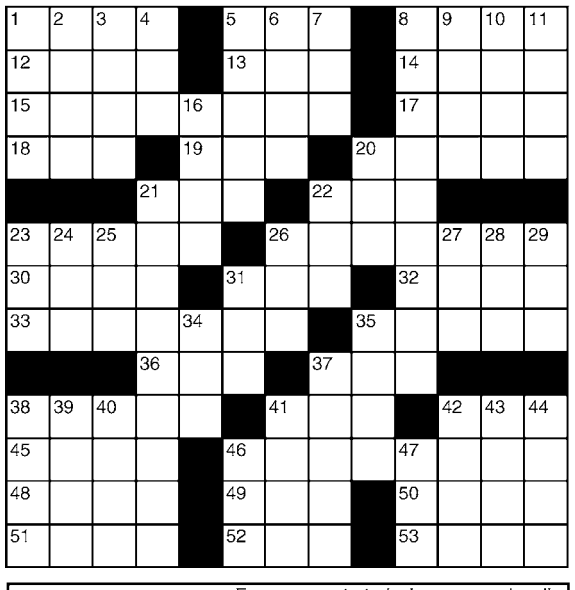
ACROSS
1 Complain
5 Fido's reply
8 Cupola
12 Sandwich cookie
13 Spelling contest
14 Concept
15 Show to be false
17 Drunkards
18 Perched
19 Type measures
20 Aerosol output
21 Newcomer to society
22 By way of
23 August forecast word
26 Soldier
30 Eye part
31 Former Saturn model
32 Race place
33 Soda purchase
35 Cruising
36 Whopper
37 Pigpen
38 Needed liniment
41 Carnival city
42 Stitch
45 Circus performer?
46 Send
48 Some deer
49 Eggs
50 Give a hoot
51 Lecherous look
52 Slithery fish
53 Verifiable

DOWN
1 Pollacks' kin
2 Met melody
3 Take ten
4 Burst
5 Mushroom cloud-maker
6 Guns the engine
7 Doctor's due
8 Difference
9 Stench
10 Transcending (Prefix)
11 Simple
16 Clarinetist's sliver
20 Madam's mate
21 Annoy
22 Forefront
23 That man's
24 Swiss canton
25 Blend
26 Stir-fry vessel
27 — and outs
28 Praise in verse
29 Scandinavian rug style
31 Hockey venue
34 Help
35 On
37 Rope fiber
38 Roundish hairstyle
39 Block the pipes
40 Shoe part
41 Split apart
42 Celebrity
43 Beige
44 Roller coaster shout
46 Anonymous John
47 Performance

Solution time: 21 mins.

B	A	T	■	■	A	C	T	■	S	E	R	A
A	L	U	M	■	M	O	O	■	E	M	I	R
T	O	R	I	■	P	O	D	■	C	U	B	E
H	E	N	N	A	■	S	O	L	O	■	■	■
■	■	■	U	S	E	■	S	E	N	I	L	E
P	A	N	T	H	E	R	■	A	D	D	E	R
O	B	O	E	■	K	O	I	■	C	L	A	N
P	L	U	S	H	■	B	O	T	H	E	R	S
S	E	N	T	R	Y	■	N	R	A	■	■	■
■	■	■	E	S	A	U	■	I	N	L	A	W
L	I	R	A	■	C	P	A	■	C	O	R	A
A	M	O	K	■	H	O	P	■	E	V	I	L
O	P	T	S	■	T	N	T	■	■	E	L	K

Yesterday's answer 12-8



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Sinead O'Connor, 43; Teri Hatcher, 45; Kim Basinger, 56; James Galway, 70

Happy Birthday: Don't give in to emotional threats. Ultimatums and demands should tell you that it's time to move on, not bend to someone's whims. There is money to be made if you can curb your habits and downsize your lifestyle. Learn from someone who knows how to save. Your numbers are 4, 10, 18, 21, 24, 33, 40

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Do wha t needs to be done. Put these burdens behind you and you can pursue greater interests. A change in your financial situation will develop through talks with an agency, institution or company. Be prepared to negotiate. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Take charge and you will soon have everyone lining up to help you achieve your goals. Your charm, coupled with experience and expertise, will make everyone want to join your cause. Enjoy greater benefits at home and work. ✪✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Back away if anyone burdens you with responsibilities that don't belong to you. Organize your time wisely so that you have some free time available to spend with someone you love. Strive for equality in all your relationships. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Taking a little extra time to do things both at work and at home will help to secure your position and ensure that you are on the right track. Talk to people with whom you have collaborated in the past. You will find a new outlet for something you do well. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Emotional matters will escalate if you have been insensitive toward someone who counts on you. Include everyone in your plans or you will be accused of being unfair. Your time will be better used doing something creative. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Expect the payback you've been waiting for. Contracts, settlements, legal or health issues can be resolved if you push for completion. An early festive event will help you connect with someone who can help you get ahead in the new year. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Spend time where it counts. Do something nice for someone who needs help. Avoid an argument with a friend by allowing everyone to have his or her own agenda and opinions. Your originality and determination will win the approval of a potential partner. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Someone at work may have a personal interest in you. Be careful not to jeopardize your position. A new look at an old idea will help you develop a marketable product. There is money to be made. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Don't trust anyone but yourself to make vital decisions that will alter your life. An unusual turn of events will perplex you. Don't waste your time trying to figure out an emotional problem. ✪✪

CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Organization and strategy will go hand-in-hand. Let the momentum build as you wholeheartedly chase your goals. Success awaits you, so don't stop until you get what you want. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Your future is about to change with a decision you make that will alter your personal life. A partnership is apparent and can help you gain respect in your community as well as lighten your overhead. A skill you have can make extra cash and boost your confidence. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): You'll be unpredictable, emotional and uncertain when it comes to personal matters. A lack of knowledge may be what stands between you and a big opportunity. Don't cut corners when it comes to preparation. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are emotional, sensitive and compassionate. You never give up on someone or something you like. You are aggressive and honest.

Eugenia's Web sites: ***eugenialast.com*** *for confidential consultations,* ***myspace.com/eugenialast*** *for Eugenia's blog,* ***astroadvice.com*** *for fun*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				4			2	
			3				1	4
		8	6		2			
	1	5	4	2		9		
7			9		1			5
		2		8	7	6	4	
			7		3	5		
3	8				4			
	9			6				

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/08

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

7	9	3	4	8	6	1	2	5
8	6	5	2	1	9	4	3	7
4	1	2	5	7	3	9	6	8
2	8	6	3	5	1	7	4	9
5	4	1	7	9	2	3	8	6
3	7	9	8	6	4	5	1	2
1	2	8	9	3	7	6	5	4
9	3	4	6	2	5	8	7	1
6	5	7	1	4	8	2	9	3

Difficulty Level ★ 12/07

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and **CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD.** The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

THE SMELL OF CRAYONS **Solution: 8 letters**

Y	O	J	N	E	R	E	B	M	E	M	E	R	T	P
C	G	H	S	G	N	I	L	E	E	F	E	E	P	L
N	H	N	S	E	Ⓢ	N	C	L	N	C	E	O	A	A
A	L	I	A	E	S	Ⓓ	L	H	O	W	L	M	P	Y
F	U	S	L	T	R	O	Ⓘ	G	S	A	O	P	E	F
N	F	Y	D	D	W	F	N	Ⓚ	T	R	E	B	R	U
I	T	L	N	E	H	I	R	N	A	A	T	O	R	L
N	H	E	A	K	Z	O	E	A	L	R	U	X	R	S
T	G	V	R	A	W	M	O	I	G	N	T	E	E	E
E	I	O	B	T	I	H	N	D	I	R	G	S	R	I
N	L	L	R	T	T	G	I	Q	C	G	A	O	U	R
S	E	A	N	U	E	T	U	C	I	L	L	N	P	O
E	D	E	O	D	Y	E	S	R	S	O	F	T	C	M
S	S	Y	N	T	H	E	T	I	C	H	A	L	K	E
W	O	N	D	E	R	F	U	L	A	C	I	G	A	M

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Appealing, Aroma, Arts, Artwork, Boxes, Brand, Chalk, Childhood, Color, Cute, Delightful, Dyes, Enjoy, Feeling, Fragrance, Fresh, Infancy, Intense, Kids, Lovely, Magical, Mellow, Memories, Noses, Nostalgic, Paper, Playful, Pure, Recognizable, Remember, Rich, Sentimental, Soft, Sweet, Synthetic, Take, Tangy, Trigger, Unique, Wonderful, Youth

Yesterday's Answer: Peninsula

Treasury 7 Send check or money order for $10.95 each plus $3.25 postage and handling each ($14.20 total each, U.S. funds only) for the first volume, $1.50 p&h for each additional volume, to Universal Uclick, Attn: Wonderword, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo. 64106 or call toll-free, 1-800-642-6480 Order online at upuzzles.com.

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Find the familiar phrase, saying or name in this arrangement of letters.

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CADAVER

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Fitial says decision to end Aggreko 'far from certain'
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• 5-Liner	$35
• 3-Liner with picture	$45
• 5-Liner with picture	$55

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- *Saipan Tribune:* All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

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Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS

Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

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Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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All advertising in the *Saipan Tribune* are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

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RCGC-EA-002	Administrative Officer	Ung; 36,000.00 to 42,000.00	12/09/09	01/09/10
RCGC-EA-003	Fiscal Officer	Ung; 36,000.00 to 42,000.00	12/09/09	01/09/10
RCGC-EA-004	Licensing Officer	Ung; 36,000.00 to 42,000.00	12/09/09	01/09/10

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/s/ Justin S. Manglona
Chairman-Personnel Committee

Lakers beat Suns for 9th straight victory

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kobe Bryant scored 26 points, Ron Artest added 15 points and five steals, and the Los Angeles Lakers raced away from the Phoenix Suns in the second half of their ninth straight victory, 108-88 Sunday night.

Pau Gasol scored 14 points for the well-rested Lakers, who improved to an NBA-best 16-3 with their second home win in 24 days over road-weary Phoenix.

Two nights after Bryant banked in a 3-pointer at the buzzer in a one-point win over Miami, the defending NBA champions didn't need another lucky shot. They made a 15-1 run late in the third quarter, holding Phoenix without a field goal for 3 1/2 minutes while jumping to a 23-point lead.

Amare Stoudemire had 18 points and eight rebounds for the Suns, who scored their fewest points of the season while playing their sixth game in six cities over the past 10 days.

Bryant had nine points in the third quarter, including a 3-pointer that put the Lakers up by 21. The Suns trimmed the lead to 14 points in the fourth before Shannon Brown hit back-to-back 3-pointers, finishing with 12 points.

Steve Nash had 12 points and 10 assists for the Suns while playing just 29 minutes, and Grant Hill had 12 points. Both veterans sat out the fourth quarter along with Stoudemire, taking a break in a demanding stretch of travel for the surprising Suns (15-6), who have lost three straight road games by an average of more than 21 points.

The Lakers realize their fast start is a partial product of an exceptionally generous early-season schedule. Los Angeles hasn't played outside of California since Nov. 13, with 15 of its first 19 games at home overall—and two more games still remaining in a six-game homestand.

Los Angeles also met its closest pursuers in the Pacific Division under fortunate circumstances twice this season. On Nov. 12, the rested Lakers beat Phoenix at home 121-102, one night after the Suns played a tough home game—just as they did Saturday night against Sacramento.

The Lakers played their league-high 15th home game, while Phoenix had its league-high 14th on the road.

Los Angeles had a superior jump from the opening tip. The Lakers raced to an 11-point lead in the first quarter and hit six 3-pointers in the half, taking a 54-44 halftime lead with late 3-pointers by Artest and Derek Fisher.

A meeting of two high-scoring teams took on a physical bent in the third quarter, with aggressive defensive play by Lamar Odom and Amare Stoudemire catching on with both clubs. Artest also played with visible aggression, harassing Phoenix's star scorers while hitting his outside shot.

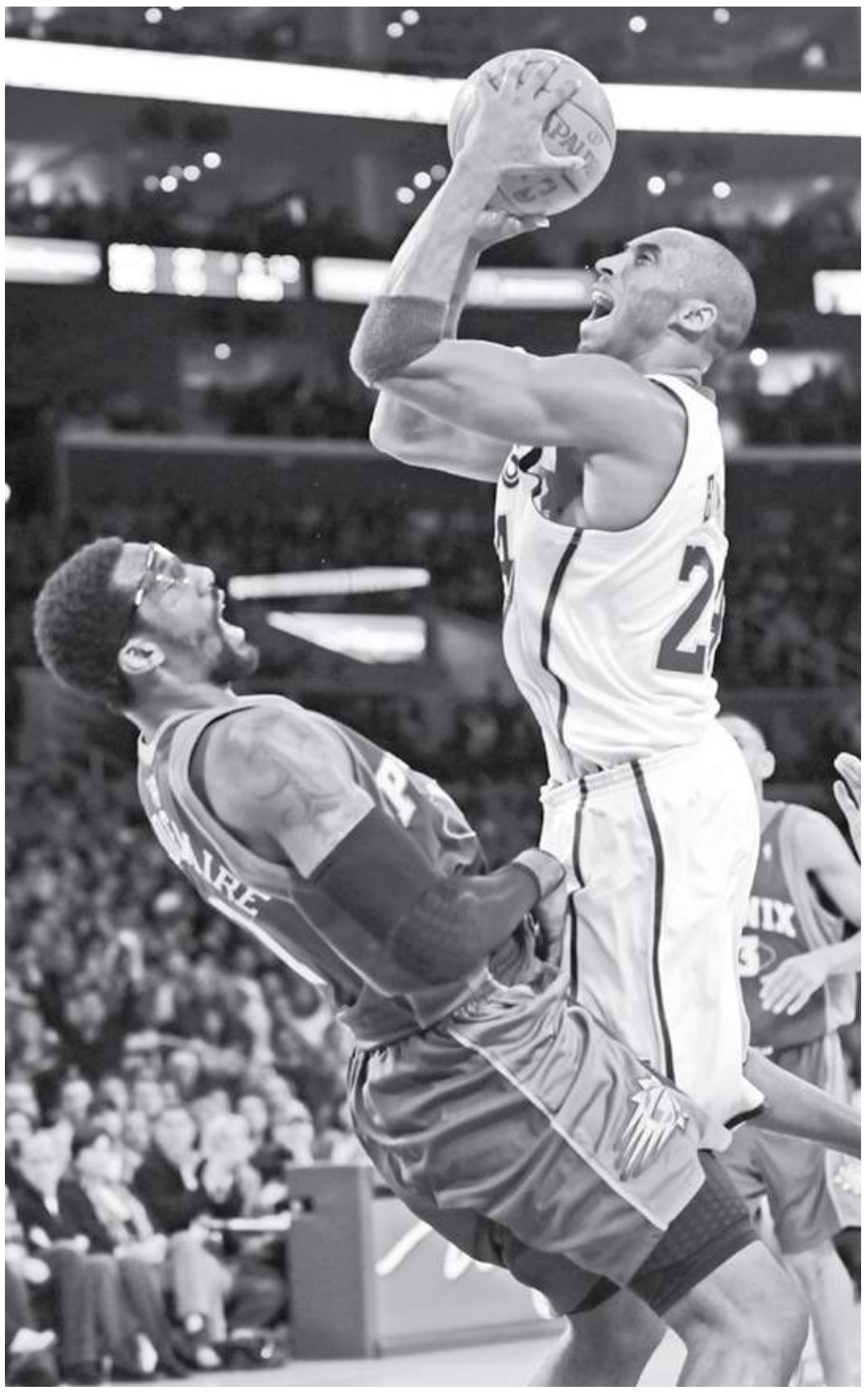
Cavaliers 101, Bucks 86

At Milwaukee, Delonte West scored 14 of his season-high 21 points in a 29-0 first-half run to lead Cleveland over Milwaukee.

LeBron James had 14 points and 10 assists for his fourth straight double-double. After opening the season 3-3, the Cavaliers have gone 12-2 to improve to 15-5.

Former Bucks guard Mo Williams scored 13 points for the Cavs, Shaquille O'Neal had 10 points in 16 minutes, and Anderson Varejao added 12 rebounds.

Bucks rookie Brandon Jennings scored 15 of his 24 points in the second half.



Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant, right, drives on Phoenix Suns forward Amare Stoudemire, left, in the second half of a NBA basketball game, Sunday, Dec. 6, 2009, in Los Angeles. AP

Knicks 106, Nets 97

At New York, Larry Hughes scored 16 of his 25 points in the third quarter as New York sent New Jersey back to its losing ways.

Al Harrington had 26 points and 14 rebounds for the Knicks in their third victory in four games. Chris Douglas-Roberts scored 26 points for New Jersey. The Nets beat Charlotte on Friday night for their first victory after NBA-record 18 straight losses to begin the season.

Pistons 98, Wizards 94

At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Rodney Stuckey scored 25 points and Charlie Villanueva added 18 as Detroit beat Washington in coach Flip Saunders' first game at the Palace since being fired by the Pistons after the 2007-08 season.

Caron Butler had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Earl Boykins scored 18 for the Wizards.

Heat 115, Kings 102

At Sacramento, California, Dwyane Wade had 34 points and 10 assists as Miami never trailed against Sacramento.

Michael Beasley had 20 points, helping the Heat beat Sacramento for the 11th time in 12 games. Quentin Richardson made five 3-pointers and also had 20 points. Dorell Wright added a season-high 19 points and Udonis Haslem had 25.

Rookie Tyreke Evans scored 30 points for the Kings.

Furyk rallies to win Tiger's event

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP)—Jim Furyk dressed in red and played the part Sunday, holing a clutch par putt and hitting his best shot of the day on the final hole to win the Chevron World Challenge for his first victory in more than two years.

He said the choice of color was a coincidence, not a statement.

Even so, it was a fitting conclusion to a week dominated by talk of Tiger Woods.

Woods, the tournament host, wasn't around to present the trophy to one of his favorite players on the PGA Tour. He withdrew because of unspecified injuries from his Nov. 27 car accident, yet Woods remained part of every conversation because of worldwide publicity over allegations of extramarital affairs.

Woods posted a statement on his Web site as the final round was under way to thank his sponsors, staff and volunteers. "And I am sincerely sorry I was unable to fulfill my duties as host and player in this important event," he said.

It was an important event to Furyk and the runner-up, Graeme McDowell, in different ways.

Furyk, who closed with a 5-under 67, last won a tournament recognized by the world ranking at the 2007 Canadian Open. He didn't imagine the drought would end at Sherwood, not after taking a six-week break after the Presidents Cup.

The way he played the final two holes made it clear Furyk has not forgotten how to close.

With a one-shot lead and in a horrible spot in the bunker well below the 17th green, Furyk played it safe to 35 feet beyond the hole and was hopeful of lagging a tricky putt to 3 feet to make no worse than bogey. Instead, he watched it break sharply to the right over the final few feet and drop into the cup for an unlikely par.

"It was a deep sigh of relief that the ball went in," Furyk said. "I knew at that point it was still my tournament to win, and I played very aggressively down the stretch."

He followed that with a 9-iron from 146 yards that landed near the hole and spun back to 5 feet. Before he could putt, Furyk saw on the leaderboard that Lee Westwood had birdied the 17th and was tied for the lead. He calmly rapped in the birdie putt.

Westwood, who recently won the European tour money title for the second time this decade, had a chance to force a playoff until he failed to hole his chip from just off the green. Then, he missed the short par putt for a 70 that left him in a tie for third with Padraig Harrington, who twice chipped in for eagle on his way to a 70.

McDowell, the replacement for Woods at this tournament, had to hole out from 18th fairway to tie Furyk, and his shot looked as though it had a chance until it spun by the hole. The birdie gave him second place alone.

That was enough to move him to No. 38 in the world, making him a lock for the Masters next year. The top 50 at the end of the year earn invitations to Augusta National, and McDowell had decided not to chase ranking points at the end of the year.

Then came a phone call about Woods withdrawing, and everything changed quickly.

"Timing is everything," McDowell said. "To get the call-up was good, although I wish it had been different circumstances. Sometimes this game gives you something back when you least expect it."

Furyk anticipated getting questions about Woods during the week, although with his 70-71 start that left him in the middle of the pack, no one sought him out. Holding the trophy of a large tiger pawing the globe, he didn't have much to say about a week of shocking publicity.

He said he sent Woods a text message when he heard of the accident, didn't hear back and has given Woods his space. Furyk said he wouldn't be surprised if Woods sents him a text for winning his tournament, "and then I would reply and wish him the best."

"Tough times," Furyk said. "So they need the support of their friends right now, and I know that people are thinking about them."

Furyk took the lead with a birdie on the 10th and never trailed again, although the tournament was in doubt until the end with so many birdies and eagles available at Sherwood.

Harrington and Stricker each had two eagles in their round, Paul Casey had a tournament-best 64 in completing his first 72-hole event since the British Open, and Camilo Villegas made an albatross on the par-5 13th by holing a 3-wood from 262 yards.

Furyk, who finished at 13-under 275, earned $1.35 million in his last event until the Northern Trust Open at Riviera in February.

"It's bothered me," Furyk said of his victory drought. "I'd be lying if I said otherwise. That's your goal every year to go out and win, and I haven't been able to do it. Hopefully, this will be a stepping stone."

Charmed Saints are 12-0, top Redskins 33-30 in OT

LANDOVER, Maryland (AP)—Garrett Hartley kicked an 18-yard field goal 6:29 into overtime Sunday as the New Orleans Saints remained unbeaten after 12 games with a 33-30 victory over the Washington Redskins.

The Saints clinched the National Football Conference South with a far-from-perfect win that shows just how charmed their season is becoming.

Drew Brees led an 80-yard drive with no timeouts, taking just 33 seconds to tie the game. He hit a wide-open Robert Meachem over the middle for a 53-yard touchdown with 1:19 to play.

Colts 27, Titans 17

At Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Colts tied the NFL record for longest winning streak, beating Tennessee for its 21st consecutive regular-season victory.

The only other team to win that many in a row: New England from 2006-08. The Colts can break the record next week at home against Denver.

Peyton Manning threw one TD pass, Joseph Addai ran for two scores and the Colts spent the second half protecting the lead against the Titans.

Cardinals 30, Vikings 17

At Glendale, Arizona, Kurt Warner, back after missing a game with a concussion, threw for 285 yards and three touchdowns as Arizona's defense stifled Brett Favre and Minnesota in a stunningly one-sided victory.

Favre set an NFL record for consecutive appearances, but game No. 283 in a row was no night to remember for him or the rest of the Vikings. The 40-year-old quarterback, with just three interceptions in the first the first 11 games, was picked off twice and sacked three times.

Even more startling, Arizona held Adrian Peterson to a season-low 19 yards in 13 carries and outrushed Minnesota 113-62.

Raiders 27, Steelers 24

At Pittsburgh, Louis Murphy caught an 11-yard touchdown pass from Bruce Gradkowski with nine seconds remaining, his second score in the final 5 1/2 minutes as Oakland scored three late touchdowns to deal Pittsburgh its fourth consecutive loss.

The Steelers, in danger of missing the playoffs after winning the Super Bowl for a second time in four seasons, went ahead 24-20 on Ben Roethlisberger's 11-yard touchdown pass to Hines Ward with 1:56 remaining, only to have the Raiders (4-8) rally and win it.

Dolphins 22, Patriots 21

At Miami, Chad Henne threw for a career-high 335 yards and directed a 51-yard drive for the winning field goal with 1:02 left, and Miami rallied past New England.

The Dolphins (6-6) overcame an early 14-point deficit to keep their slim playoff prospects alive, while AFC East leader New England (7-5) remained winless in five games in opponents' stadiums this season.

Eagles 34, Falcons 7

At Atlanta, Michael Vick accounted for a pair of touchdowns on his return to the Georgia Dome—one running, the other passing —and basked in the cheers of his former home and Philadelphia thoroughly dominated the short-handed Atlanta.

The Eagles pulled two games ahead of the reeling Falcons in the NFC wild-card standings, bringing a little more clarity to the playoff race. But most of the attention was on Vick's first game in Atlanta since he went off to prison for dogfighting.

Giants 31, Cowboys 24

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Brandon Jacobs had the Giants' longest play of the season for just a few minutes, then Domenik Hixon topped it, lifting New York past Dallas.

The Giants tightened the NFC East with their win, dropping Dallas into a tie with Philadelphia for the lead. New York has swept Dallas this season and plays Philadelphia here next Sunday night.

Chargers 30, Browns 23

At Cleveland, LaDainian Tomlinson scored his 150th career TD and stiff-armed Hall of Famer Jim Brown for eighth place on the career rushing list as San Diego won its seventh straight and 15th in a row in December by beating Cleveland.

Antonio Gates set a career high with 167 yards receiving for the Chargers (9-3), who dragged their cleats early and only led 13-7 at halftime. But Philip Rivers led San Diego on touchdown drives of 85 and 83 yards in just over nine minutes in the third quarter to open a 27-7 lead.

Bengals 23, Lions 13

At Cincinnati, running back Cedric Benson returned from a two-game layoff because of an injured hip and tied the team record with his fifth 100-yard game of the season, setting up Cincinnati's victory over Detroit that had even greater significance for the franchise.

The Bengals assured themselves of a winning record for only the second time in 19 years. The other one came in 2005, when Cincinnati won the American Football Conference North and lost its opening playoff game to Pittsburgh.

Jaguars 23, Texans 18

At Jacksonville, Florida, David Garrard threw two touchdown passes and Josh Scobee kicked three field goals as Jacksonville stayed in the AFC wild-card hunt with a victory over Houston.

It was Jacksonville's fifth straight victory at home and came in front of an announced crowd of 42,079 — the lowest in franchise history.

Panthers 16, Buccaneers 6

At Charlotte, North Carolina, Jonathan Stewart rushed for 120 yards and the game's only touchdown, and the Panthers intercepted rookie Josh Freeman five times—three times near the goal line—in a victory over Tampa Bay.

With struggling QB Jake Delhomme (broke finger) sidelined, Matt Moore made his fourth professional start and his first since the end of the 2007 season for Carolina (5-7).

Broncos 44, Chiefs 13

At Kansas City, Missouri, Kyle Orton threw two touchdown passes as Denver used a punishing running game to manhandle Kansas City.

Denver had 245 yards rushing to turn the 99th meeting between AFL originals into a laugher. Correll Buckhalter ran for 113 yards and Knowshon Moreno had two touchdown runs to help the Broncos (8-4) stay within reach of San Diego in the AFC West.

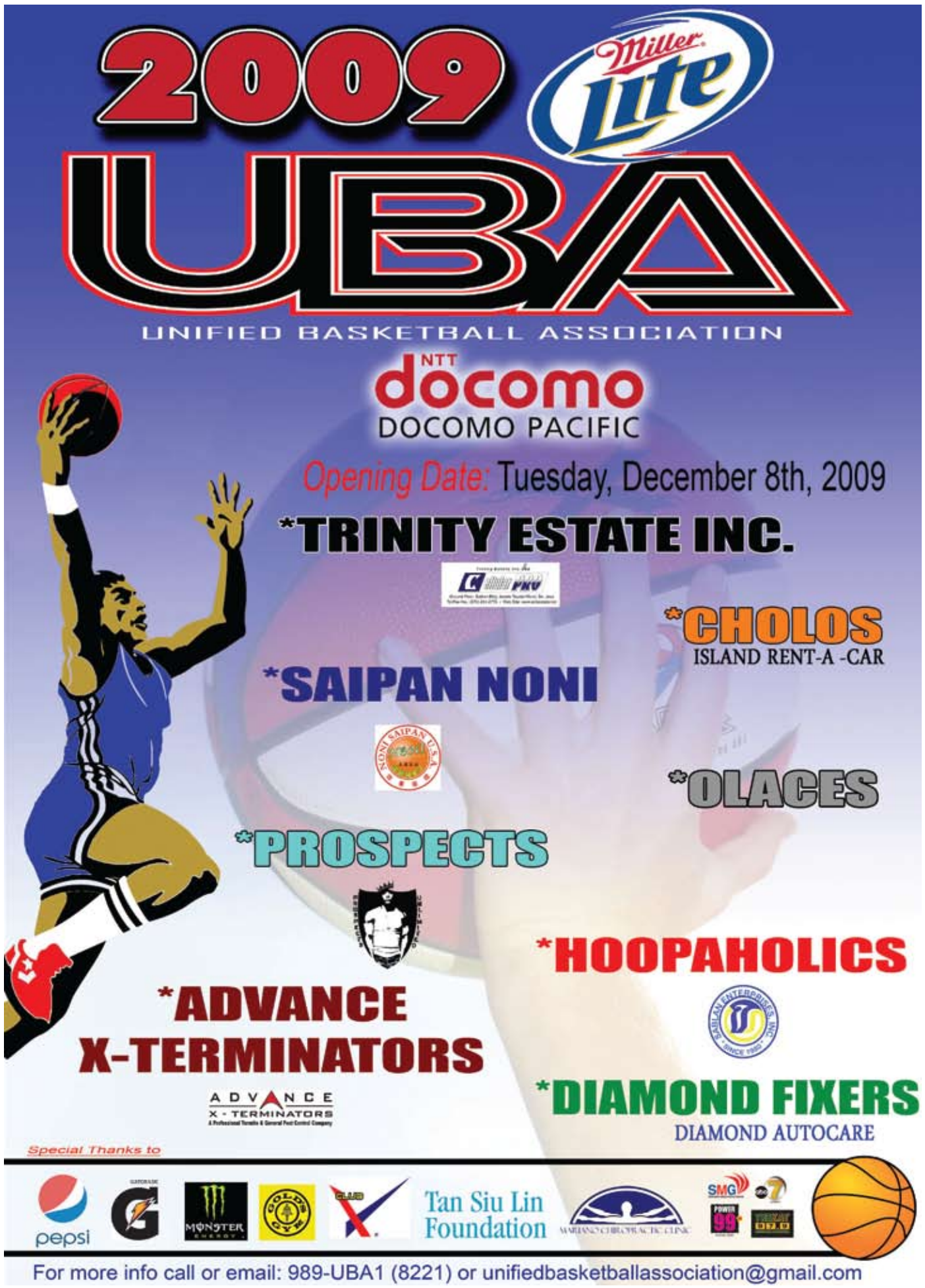
Bears 17, Rams 9

At Chicago, Jay Cutler fizzled after a strong start, throwing for 143 yards and a touchdown without an interception as Chicago beat St. Louis.

Cutler threw for 131 yards in the first quarter as the Bears built a 10-0 lead. After that? Chicago went to the run, St. Louis rallied and Bears receiver Devin Hester left the game with a calf injury.

Seahawks 20, 49ers 17

At Seattle, Olindo Mare kicked a 30-yard field goal as time expired to send Seattle over San Francisco, which wasted a career passing day from Alex Smith and many other opportunities.



Red Sox agree to $13M deal with Scutaro

BOSTON (AP)—Marco Scutaro slipped on his new Red Sox jersey to pose for the cameras, then asked whether he should leave it on for the rest of the news conference.

"Sure. Go for it," Red Sox general manager Theo Epstein confirmed.

You'll excuse Scutaro if he's tentative about slipping into a position that's seen little stability since 2004. Boston has churned through seven regular shortstops since trading away Nomar Garciaparra, but Epstein thinks he has one that can solidify the position for at leas the next two years.

"We identified Marco as the best free agent and the guy that would be the best fit for the ballclub," Epstein said. "We're getting a really good player who's finally getting his chance."

Scutaro and the Red Sox agrees to a contract that guarantees him $13 million over three seasons. He will get a $1 million signing bonus this year and $5 million salaries in 2010 and 2011.

UBA caging kicks off tonight

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Inaugural 2009 UBA/Miller Lite Men's Basketball League will open shop tonight at the Garapan Basketball Court.

League coordinator and Unified Basketball Association president James Lee said the opening ceremony will start at 6pm and will feature the traditional parade of teams. He added supporters and prime movers of the league will also be recognized at the opening rites as they will be presented with plaque of appreciation.

UBA's initial men's caging will have eight teams, namely Budweiser league champion Hoopaholics, UFO champion Noni Saipan (formerly Chow Queen), PILCOWA champion Diamond Auto Fixers, Ol'Aces, Advance X-Terminators, Prospects, Trinity Estate, Inc., and Cholos.

These teams will battle for the first UBA championship and the $1,000 cash prize.

Lee said two games will be played tonight with teams that will see action in the opening to be determined via a draw.

After tonight's matches, the UBA caging will resume with its original schedule, playing games every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Make-up games will be set for Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.

Each team will play seven games in the regular season and only the Top 6 squads will advance to the playoffs. The Top 2 finishers will then draw byes in the first round, while the four remaining squads will battle it out in the single-elimination playoffs. The championship round will be a best-of-three title series.

At the end of the season, UBA will award trophies to the Top 3 finishers and best individual performers, such as the finals and regular season MVPs and Mythical 5 members.

13 NETTERS

From Page 28

2006 edition of the Micronesian Games. Montgomery also claimed the men's singles crown after beating Quan in the finals, while Race won the bronze after edging Heo. Heo and Quan settled for the silver medal in the men's doubles.

In the women's singles finals, Aikawa topped Guam's Michelle Pang in the finals, and she and Race also won the gold medal in the mixed doubles, beating Montgomery and Arriola.

In the team event, the CNMI also claimed the gold medal, outclassing Kosrae and the Marshall Islands. In the women's team event, the host notched a bronze medal, while Guam and Pohnpei took the gold and silver, respectively.

HELL

From Page 28

because my hamstring was tightening up. He (Heo) went ahead and I was behind between five and 10 minutes," Mister added.

However, Mister still finished ahead of Heo, who reached the finish line loop in the under 3:40:00 mark, after the Korean rider decided to wait for the Marianas High School teacher.

Race announcer Glenn Policare and volunteers at the finish line were clueless why Heo stopped a few feet away from the finish line only to realize in the end the Korean rider was waiting for Mister.

When Mister entered the loop and shook hands with Heo, the former finally crossed the finish line. Heo timed in at 3:44:41 against Mister's 3:44:07.

"It was a tremendous show of sportsmanship. It was something I've never seen before," Mister said.

The Top 2 finishers, Russia's Alexandre Bagenov and Eugeniy Smarchkov, also showed sportsmanship, as both riders decided to enter the loop together and neither seemed to want to leave each other behind. In the end, Smarchkov gave way to the much veteran Bagenov, who cut the tape at the 3:03:25. Smarchkov timed in at 3:03:26.

As early as 5am, volunteers were already at the southern parking lot of Pacific Islands Club to assist riders checking in. Others were assigned to aid stations as far as the Radar Tower and stayed at their posts for more than five hours or until the last rider passed their stations.

There were also vehicles following riders, ready to assist those who will encounter problems. Then there were volunteers from the Department of Public Safety, clearing traffic and ensuring the safety of both the riders and motorists.

All these unsung heroes made the third edition of the Hell a heavenly experience.

SAIPAN

From Page 28

Tabora was still on target in the second quarter to lead UoL's breakaway. He added 13 more points and Loyola gained contributions from six other players to take commanding a 53-34 halftime lead.

Loyola stretched the lead to 26 at the end of the third period, 79-53, as it continued to draw points from every player it fielded in the game en route to a 31-point win.

In the second match for the open division, Tabora played for New City International Construction, but his game-high 29 points were not enough to lift his team to a win against Saipan Fresh Market.

Saipan Fresh pulled off a 95-89 victory against NCIC to improve to a 3-1 record and gain a share of the lead with Diamond Ali'i.

NCIC ended up with a 0-4 slate in the first round of the double-round robin regular season.

The Tabora-led squad kept Saipan Fresh within striking in the first three quarters, as NCIC trailed by only two, 63-65, entering the final canto.

Tabora still had enough juice despite playing in the first game and fired 12 points in the fourth quarter against Saipan Fresh. However, he was the lone NCIC player to score more than one field goal in the final canto, while Saipan Fresh drew contributions from several players.

Gil Capor made 10 of his 22 points in the payoff period, Lerio Pagarao chipped in four and three more players tallied two field goals each to lift Saipan Fresh to a six-point win.

Masters

UoL 106 – Tabora 35, Villarin 18, De La Torre 10, Cosino 10, Jinang 8, Brien 7, Moran 6, Bicera 5, Puri 3, Manalili 2, Salazar 2.

GEC 75 – Villanueva 19, Illahi 15, Salazar 13, Calma 10, Geli 4, Villegas 4, Macoto 4, Yalung 3.

Scoring by quarters: 20-18, 53-34, 79-53, 106-75.

Open

Saipan Fresh 95 – Pagarao 24, Sanciangco 22, Opone 12, Gapor 10, Factor 10, Estolas 6, Villacrusis 5, Tumaquip 4, Mina 2.

NCIC 89 – Tabora 29, Abenoja 13, Ong 10, Taylor 10, Galarse 9, Javier 8, Deleon Guerrero 4, Detera 2, Lansang 2.

Scoring by quarters: 19-21, 49-42, 65-63, 95-85.

MAN

From Page 28

21-team league.

Manny and Peter hit a two-run homer apiece at the bottom of the first, giving Man Amigo a 7-0 lead. Laniyo duplicated that feat in the third inning with his own two-run homer.

While Man Amigo was on target, Team Familia was shut out in the first two innings and scored only in the third on its foes' two errors and on Collin Reyes' double.

Natibu 12, Ur Balls 2

Also scoring a 10-run win was Natibu, which defeated Ur Balls, 12-2.

B.J. Sablan flied out in his first try at-bat, but hit back-to-back homers to lead Natibu to an easy win. He had a solo homer at the top of the fifth, giving Natibu a 5-1 advantage and then followed it up with a two-run homer at the top of the seventh.

Ur Balls scored only in the first and sixth innings on Oliver Secharmedal's one-run double and solo homer, respectively.

Islander Rebels 20, G-Ballers 12

The Island Rebels tallied the most home runs of the night with four en route to a 20-12 win over the G-Ballers.

Extra hitter Oscar Sablan had two homers in the Island Rebels' victory and went perfect at the plate, going 4-for-4. He also scored four runs, five RBIs, and one double.

Toi Celis and B.J. Babauta hit a two-run homer apiece with the former also going 4-for-4 at-bat and making three runs, four RBIs, and two doubles.

The G-Ballers also logged one roundtripper courtesy of Jude Dickerson's three-run homer at the bottom of the seventh inning.

The G-Ballers were ahead at the top of the seventh, 13-12, when Celis' homer sparked the Island Rebels comeback, as the eventual winners scored eight runs at the bottom of the last inning.

Chura 13, Freedom Air 8

In the last game of the night, Chura only had one homer, but still it was enough to propel the team to a 13-8 win over Freedom Air Flyers.

Chura pulled off a five-run win after grounding Freedom Air in the last two innings.

Mel Sakisat went 3-for-4 for Chura, including a three-run homer at the top of the first inning. He made four RBIs and scored one run.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	16	4	.800	–
Toronto	9	13	.409	8
New York	6	15	.286	10 1/2
Philadelphia	5	15	.250	11
New Jersey	1	19	.050	15

Southeast Division

Orlando	16	4	.800	–
Atlanta	14	6	.700	2
Miami	11	9	.550	5
Charlotte	8	11	.421	7 1/2
Washington	7	12	.368	8 1/2

Central Division

Cleveland	15	5	.750	–
Milwaukee	9	10	.474	5 1/2
Detroit	8	12	.400	7
Chicago	7	11	.389	7
Indiana	6	12	.333	8

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

Dallas	14	7	.667	–
Houston	11	9	.550	2 1/2
San Antonio	9	8	.529	3
New Orleans	8	11	.421	5
Memphis	8	12	.400	5 1/2

Northwest Division

Denver	15	5	.750	–
Portland	13	8	.619	2 1/2
Utah	11	8	.579	3 1/2
Oklahoma City	10	9	.526	4 1/2
Minnesota	3	17	.150	12

Pacific Division

L.A. Lakers	16	3	.842	–
Phoenix	15	6	.714	2
Sacramento	9	10	.474	7
L.A. Clippers	9	11	.450	7 1/2
Golden State	6	13	.316	10

Yesterday's Games
New York 106, New Jersey 97
Cleveland 101, Milwaukee 86
Detroit 98, Washington 94
Miami 115, Sacramento 102
L.A. Lakers 108, Phoenix 88

NBA LEADERS

SCORING

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Anthony, DEN	20	209	172	608	30.4
Bryant, LAL	18	196	115	523	29.1
Durant, OKC	19	183	146	534	28.1
James, CLE	19	184	136	531	27.9
Nowitzki, DAL	21	196	153	561	26.7
Wade, MIA	19	166	157	507	26.7
Bosh, TOR	22	181	169	537	24.4
Ellis, GOL	19	181	90	463	24.4
Granger, IND	17	130	102	414	24.4
Johnson, ATL	20	167	69	429	21.5
Jennings, MIL	18	141	56	381	21.2
Arenas, WAS	18	132	84	380	21.1
Boozer, UTA	19	160	78	398	20.9
Gay, MEM	19	150	76	390	20.5
Roy, POR	21	146	109	428	20.4
Harrington, NYK	20	142	81	397	19.9
Gordon, DET	17	114	76	331	19.5
Evans, SAC	17	119	80	329	19.4
Stoudemire, PHX	20	141	100	382	19.1
Williams, UTA	17	126	51	324	19.1

FG PERCENTAGE

	FG	FGA	PCT
Howard, ORL	122	189	.646
Perkins, BOS	92	143	.643
Gasol, MEM	105	171	.614
Oden, POR	92	152	.605
Hilario, DEN	110	184	.598
Paul, NOR	91	156	.583
Bynum, LAL	118	204	.578
Horford, ATL	111	195	.569
Landry, HOU	123	217	.567
Lee, NYK	145	256	.566

REBOUNDS

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Wallace, CHA	19	42	189	231	12.2
Bosh, TOR	22	88	179	267	12.1
Howard, ORL	20	76	166	242	12.1
Noah, CHI	18	73	139	212	11.8
Boozer, UTA	19	39	172	211	11.1
Camby, LAC	20	53	166	219	11.0
Haywood, WAS	18	81	114	195	10.8
Duncan, SAN	15	47	115	162	10.8
Okafor, NOR	19	61	132	193	10.2
Bynum, LAL	16	49	112	161	10.1

ASSISTS

	G	AST	AVG
Nash, PHX	20	224	11.2
Williams, UTA	17	169	9.9
Paul, NOR	11	107	9.7
Rondo, BOS	20	180	9.0
Kidd, DAL	21	185	8.8
James, CLE	19	157	8.3
Westbrook, OKC	19	134	7.1
B. Davis, LAC	20	137	6.9
Arenas, WAS	18	115	6.4
Calderon, TOR	22	140	6.4

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
New England	7	5	0	.583	328	224
Miami	6	6	0	.500	278	296
N.Y. Jets	6	6	0	.500	249	208
Buffalo	4	8	0	.333	199	261

South

x-Indianapolis	12	0	0	1.000	331	201
Jacksonville	7	5	0	.583	225	273
Tennessee	5	7	0	.417	246	316
Houston	5	7	0	.417	277	266

North

Cincinnati	9	3	0	.750	254	187
Baltimore	6	5	0	.545	257	188
Pittsburgh	6	6	0	.500	272	231
Cleveland	1	11	0	.083	145	309

West

San Diego	9	3	0	.750	342	242
Denver	8	4	0	.667	240	202
Oakland	4	8	0	.333	142	282
Kansas City	3	9	0	.250	196	326

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

Dallas	8	4	0	.667	279	213
Philadelphia	8	4	0	.667	327	235
N.Y. Giants	7	5	0	.583	303	285
Washington	3	9	0	.250	200	238

South

x-New Orleans	12	0	0	1.000	440	251
Atlanta	6	6	0	.500	279	279
Carolina	5	7	0	.417	215	262
Tampa Bay	1	11	0	.083	187	330

North

Minnesota	10	2	0	.833	359	233
Green Bay	7	4	0	.636	296	215
Chicago	5	7	0	.417	233	270
Detroit	2	10	0	.167	206	358

West

Arizona	8	4	0	.667	297	234
San Francisco	5	7	0	.417	245	233
Seattle	5	7	0	.417	243	267
St. Louis	1	11	0	.083	139	314

x-clinched division

Yesterday's Games
Chicago 17, St. Louis 9
Oakland 27, Pittsburgh 24
Denver 44, Kansas City 13
Philadelphia 34, Atlanta 7
Cincinnati 23, Detroit 13
Miami 22, New England 21
New Orleans 33, Washington 30, OT
Indianapolis 27, Tennessee 17
Carolina 16, Tampa Bay 6
Jacksonville 23, Houston 18
San Diego 30, Cleveland 23
N.Y. Giants 31, Dallas 24
Seattle 20, San Francisco 17
Arizona 30, Minnesota 17

CHEVRON WORLD CHALLENGE SCORES

THOUSAND OAKS, California (AP)–Scores Sunday from the $5.75 million Chevron World Challenge at the par-72, 7,027-yard Sherwood Country Club:

FINAL ROUND

Jim Furyk, $1.35 million	70-71-67-67–275
Graeme McDowell, $800,000	71-69-66-70–276
Lee Westwood, $450,000	71-67-69-70–277
Padraig Harrington, $450,000	69-68-70-70–277
Stewart Cink, $243,750	70-73-68-68–279
Zach Johnson, $243,750	68-70-74-67–279
Sean O'Hair, $243,750	71-67-71-70–279
Ian Poulter, $243,750	68-69-71-71–279
Y.E. Yang, $195,000	70-65-71-74–280
Steve Stricker, $190,000	71-74-71-65–281
Paul Casey, $182,500	75-69-74-64–282
Kenny Perry, $182,500	72-65-72-73–282
Lucas Glover, $175,000	74-67-70-75–286
Mike Weir, $170,000	73-70-73-71–287
Anthony Kim, $160,000	71-74-73-70–288
Martin Kaymer, $160,000	73-72-72-71–288
Camilo Villegas, $160,000	73-69-74-72–288
Justin Leonard, $150,000	72-74-72-73–291

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOCAL SCORES

PILCOWA STANDINGS

Open

Diamond	3	1
Saipan Fresh	3	1
IT&E	2	1
Noni Saipan	1	2
NCIC	0	3

Masters

Ebisuya	4	0
University of Loyola	3	1
Wushin	1	2
GEC	1	2
Cool Water	1	3

2009 Annual Turkey Trot Run

Photos By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Finishers of the race pose for a group photo with the foggy atmosphere of Mt. Tapochao as their backdrop.

Four runners walk their way to the finish line.

Participants in the 2009 Annual Turkey Trot Run start the race at Lower Base early morning with the sun still yet to shine.

From left, Peter Mendiola, Jerry Diaz, Joe Villacrusis, and James Lee pose for a group photo before the start of the race.

Jake Lee, left, and Danny Auther engage in a neck-and-neck finish.

John Auther still has the energy to run to the finish line.

Joshua Berger raises his arms as he nears the finish line.

Tyce Mister smiles as he nears the finish line.

Angelo Jones, left, and Katie Peters react as they near the finish line.

CNMI tennis coach Jeff Race gasps for air after completing the grueling 4.2-mile race up to Mt. Tapochao.

UBA caging kicks off tonight

The Inaugural 2009 UBA/ Miller Lite Men's Basketball League will open shop tonight at the Garapan Basketball Court. **26**

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Lakers beat Suns for 9th straight victory

Kobe Bryant scored 26 points, Ron Artest added 15 points and five steals, and the Los Angeles Lakers raced away from the Phoenix Suns in the second half of their ninth straight victory, 108-88 Sunday night. **24**

13 netters vie for Micro Games slots

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Northern Marianas Islands Tennis Association started its preparation for the 2010 Micronesian Games as early as last month with 13 players vying for slots on the CNMI National Tennis Team.

CNMI coach Jeff Race, who is among the players trying out for the team, said he and the 10 other netters are having training sessions thrice a week. The Commonwealth's netters train every Wednesday and Friday from 6pm to 8pm at the Pacific Islands Club and every Saturday from 1pm to 3pm.

Joining Race in the pool are junior netters Ji Hoon Heo and Rafael Jones, 2006 Micronesia Games gold medalist Todd Montgomery and Fiesta Resort & Spa tennis instructor Peter Loyola. In the women's division, vying for berths are junior players Laila Mailman, Melody Johnson, Jodel Fernandez, and Thea Minor. Lydia Tan is the lone adult player so far hoping to gain a seat on the team. Gold medalist Kana Aikawa and former CNMI No. 1 junior female player Mayuko Arriola are also expected to join the training sessions when they return to Saipan next year.

Minor

Montgomery

"We will hold a challenge tournament next year and winning players will get points, which will help NMITA determine who gets to be part of the team," Race said.

Only four players each in the men's and women's divisions will be chosen to represent the CNMI in next year's Micronesian Games to be held in Palau.

"There will also be several tournaments next year that will help us choose who will make it to the team," said Race, adding NMITA will make the cut in February.

The 2010 Micronesian Games will run from Aug. 1 to 10 with the CNMI Tennis Team hoping to defend its overall title. The Commonwealth's champion team in the 2006 Micronesian Games that Saipan hosted was composed of Race, Montgomery, Tim Quan, Heo, Arriola, Aikawa, Mailman, Vivian Lee, Audrey Motto, and alternates Ralph Buenaventura and Nicolas Son.

Quan could not make it to next year's training sessions, as he has work commitments in the mainland. Race and Montgomery won the men's doubles title in the

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'Hell' showcased sportsmanship, volunteerism

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The 3rd Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle was not all about competition, as it also featured sportsmanship and volunteerism that made the event a delight for participants.

Saipan's Tyce Mister and Korea's Dhan Heo displayed a rare tale of sportsmanship in Saturday's lung-busting race when the latter let the former finish first.

The two riders were together cruising back to the finish line when Mister noticed the Korean starting to get tired after the numerous climbs.

"He was catching his breath and was mumbling words like this race is tough and he can't make it, he was so tired," Mister said. "However, I told him 'come on, you can do it, we can do it, we're almost there.'"

Mister kept encouraging Heo to go on and little did the former know he will be the one to stop racing for awhile while the Korean soldiered on.

"I had to pull over to stretch

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Pro rider Alexandre Bagenov leads the main peloton on its way up to San Vicente village during the early Saturday morning race in the 3rd Annual Hell of the Marianas Century Cycle.

Saipan Fresh gains share of lead, UoL wins

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
University of Loyola's Jun Tabora pulls up for a floater against two GEC Pawnshop defenders during their game in the PILCOWA caging on Saturday at the JP Centre Basketball Court.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Saipan Fresh Market and University of Loyola ended the first round of the regular season of the 2009 PILCOWA Basketball League on a winning note after downing separate opponents on Saturday at the JP Centre Basketball Court.

In the first game for the masters division, Jun Tabora exploded for 35 points to lift University of Loyola to a 106-75 rout of GEC Pawnshop.

Tabora started hot for UoL, nailing 12 points, but his team still fell behind by a deuce after the opening quarter, 18-20.

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Man Amigo routs Team Familia

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slow-pitch Softball League had a four-game treat on Friday night with Man Amigo posting the most lopsided win at the Capital Hill Ballfield.

Man Amigo finished off Team Familia, 13-3, after only four and a half innings.

Manny and Peter Sablan and J.J. Laniyo made one homer each to lift Man Amigo to an easy win in its first game in the

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Oliver Secharmidal, seen here picking up a grounder, plays for Ur Balls, which lost to Natibu in Chamolinian Softball Association's 2009 Budweiser Slow-pitch Softball League on Friday at the Capital Hill Ballfield.
ROSELYN B. MONROYO